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**AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF LUKE 1:26-38
THROUGH TEXT AND ART**

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29 November 2018

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

This thesis is my own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other institution. To the best of my knowledge the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

A thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy (5129) at The University of Notre Dame, Australia.

School of Philosophy and Theology, Fremantle.

29 November 2018

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DISCLAIMER

The images of the Early European Renaissance artworks for this research were provided by the Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth, Western Australia.

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ABSTRACT

In the Gospel of Luke, Mary of Nazareth's encounter with the angel Gabriel has captured the attention and the imagination of theologians, scholars and artists for millennia, for in it the evangelist, communicates the announcement of the Incarnation of the long-promised Messiah. This exegetical study of the Annunciation through text and art examines how this good news was communicated to the first readers. Then following on from this acquired knowledge, this research seeks to discover if the understanding of the Annunciation has evolved over time by examining four artworks: two from sixteenth-century Europe and two from twentieth-century Australia. Each artwork captures a single moment of the Annunciation event but was conditioned by their historical circumstances. By examining how this narrative was communicated, and the resultant theology presented in each artwork, it is anticipated that a junction or disjunction between the articulated theology of the Church of each period will be identified.

Chapter I: Introduction

The true beginning of the New Testament¹ is the affirmative reply of Mary of Nazareth, a young Jewish girl, to God's messenger, the archangel Gabriel and her conception by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:26-38) of the long-prophesied Messiah." In presenting the event of the Annunciation, Luke the evangelist communicates the announcement of the Incarnation of the promised Messiah to the audience of his time. The narrative is reflected in many artworks, but four have been chosen for this study: two from the sixteenth century and two from the twentieth century. Each artwork captures a single moment of the Annunciation event and each of the artworks was also conditioned by their historical circumstances.

Research Purpose

This research hopes to examine and consider what has been communicated or forgone by the choices made by either the Lukan author or artist in their portrayal of the historical event of the Incarnation. Both the text of the Annunciation to Mary by the Archangel Gabriel in Luke 1:26-38 and its depiction in four artworks, were created for different purposes and from different epochs in history. The Lukan author and the artists were all communicating the same event of the Incarnation of the promised Messiah to different audiences at different times. Both the Lukan author and the artists had their own understanding of this historical event. By examining and considering the selected pericope and artworks, it is hoped that a perspective of the interplay between text and artworks communicating the Annunciation event will emerge.

Elaboration of Research Task

The purpose of this research is to discover if the understanding of the Annunciation has evolved over time; or has there been junction or disjunction between the articulated theology of the Church of each period being examined (namely: from first century Christianity, Early Renaissance and late twentieth century) and the resultant theology presented in the artworks.

¹ Pope Benedict XVI and Philip Whitmore, *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives*, vol. 3, Jesus of Nazareth Trilogy (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 26; also see for the prophecies relating to the promised messiah: Deut 18:18-20, Isa 7:14, Dan 7:13-14.

Listed below is the chosen pericope Luke 1:26-38 in both the Koine Greek version from the Apparatus for the Greek New Testament: SBL Edition and the English version from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). ²

Table 1:1 - English Translation of Luke 1:26-38 in Koine Greek

Luke 1:26-38 - Koine Greek	Luke 1:26-38 (NRSV)
²⁶ Ἐν δὲ τῷ μηνὶ τῷ ἕκτῳ ἀπεστάλη ὁ ἄγγελος Γαβριὴλ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς πόλιν τῆς Γαλιλαίας ἣ ὄνομα Ναζαρέτ	²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,
²⁷ πρὸς παρθένον ἐμνηστευμένην ἀνδρὶ ᾧ ὄνομα Ἰωσήφ ἐξ οἴκου Δαβὶδ, καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς παρθένου Μαρίας.	²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.
²⁸ καὶ εἰσελθὼν πρὸς αὐτήν εἶπεν Χαῖρε, κεχαριτωμένη ὁ κύριος μετὰ σοῦ	²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you."
²⁹ ἡ δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ διεταράχθη καὶ διελογίζετο ποταπὸς εἶη ὁ ἀσπασμὸς οὗτος.	²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.
³⁰ καὶ ἰδοὺ συλλήμψῃ ἐν γαστρὶ καὶ τέξῃ υἱόν	³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God.
³¹ καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν.	³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.
³² οὗτος ἔσται μέγας καὶ υἱὸς Ὑψίστου κληθήσεται, καὶ δώσει αὐτῷ Κύριος ὁ θεὸς τὸν θρόνον Δαβὶδ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ	³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.

² Greek New Testament: SBL Edition (Atlanta, Georgia: The Society of Biblical Literature; also available at Logos Bible Software, 2010), <https://biblia.com/books/sblgnt/Lk1.26>. electronic resource.

Luke 1:26-38 - Koine Greek	Luke 1:26-38 (NRSV)
³³ καὶ βασιλεύσει ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰακώβ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, καὶ τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔσται τέλος.	³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”
³⁴ εἶπεν δὲ Μαριάμ πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον Πῶς ἔσται τοῦτο, ἐπεὶ ἄνδρα οὐ γινώσκω	³⁴ Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”
³⁵ καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ ἄγγελος εἶπεν αὐτῇ Πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σέ καὶ δύναμις Ὑψίστου ἐπισκιάσει σοι· διὸ καὶ τὸ γεννώμενον ἅγιον κληθήσεται υἱὸς θεοῦ·	³⁵ The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.
³⁶ καὶ ἰδοὺ Ἐλισάβετ ἡ συγγενὴς σου καὶ αὐτὴ συνείληφεν υἱὸν ἐν γήρει αὐτῆς, καὶ οὗτος μὴν ἕκτος ἐστὶν αὐτῇ τῇ καλουμένῃ στείρᾳ·	³⁶ And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren.
³⁷ ὅτι οὐκ ἀδυνατήσει παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ πᾶν ῥῆμα.	³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.”
³⁸ εἶπεν δὲ Μαριάμ Ἰδοὺ ἡ δούλη Κυρίου· γένοιτό μοι κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμά σου. καὶ ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ’ αὐτῆς ὁ ἄγγελος.	³⁸ Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

The following table lists the artworks being examined as part of this research.

Table 1:2 - List of Selected Artworks

Artwork 1	(c. 1505–1510). “ <i>Rothschild Prayer Book, Fols 84v-85r: The Annunciation. Matins, Hours of the Virgin</i> ” Ghent and Bruges
Artwork 2	“ <i>The Madonna Annunciate; The Angel Gabriel</i> ” - (c. 15th/16th) by Falcó, Nicolás.
Artwork 3	“ <i>Ante Lucem</i> ” (<i>Before the Light</i>) – 1990 by John Paul
Artwork 4	“ <i>Triptych of the Annunciation</i> ” – 1990 by Alan Oldfield

Chapter II: Methodology & Literature Review

Methodology

To understand the interplay between text and artworks, this research aims to take an integrated approach – a comprehensive understanding of Luke 1:26-38 will be established against which the artworks can be examined. In this research, the Annunciation in the Gospel of Luke is viewed from three perspectives:

1. 70-90 CE – the original context¹ behind the composition of the Gospel of Luke;
2. Early Renaissance (Artwork 1 and 2) use and expression of Luke 1:26-38 in artworks and their theology; and
3. Contemporary (Artwork 3 and 4) use and interpretation of Luke 1:26-38 in artworks alongside a contemporary theology.

Each context is separate but linked to the others, as they all focus on the same event of the Annunciation. The research will investigate the Gospel of Luke in terms of its authorship, intended audience and reception in the original context of composition. In parallel to this, investigation into how the Annunciation is depicted in the artworks will encompass the use of the historical context, material culture, iconography and art analysis.

In order to gain an understanding of the original meaning of the Annunciation pericope in its original historical context, historical criticism will be used. This method provides the opportunity to trace the origins, development and significance of the Annunciation within “the world behind the text.” It will also provide insights to the world behind the artworks to be considered, and the interpretation of the same Lukan passage through the artworks respectively. The following diagram details the methodology:

¹ This time frame is the general consensus of scholars. Carroll Stuhlmueller, "The Gospel According to Luke," in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1968), 44:18.

Table 2:1 - Methodology Diagram

Task: to identify an understanding of the Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38) in the text as well as in four selected artworks from 16th and 20th centuries.

Part I: Examination of the text

Luke 1:26-38 will be researched through Historical Criticism to discover:

- World of the Text – to establish the historicity of Jesus’ birth, the Lukan author chronologically associates it with the reign of King Herod the Great with the arrival of the angel Gabriel to Nazareth (Lk 1:5, 26).
- World Behind the Text - Lukan author penned this gospel sometime during the Flavian Dynasty, which was from 69-96 CE.

Part II: Examination of the Artworks

Luke 1:26-38 will be researched through Historical Criticism to discover:

- How the text is understood in its historical-theological context and;
- How it is depicted in the artworks.

This will be conducted by using the knowledge and understanding acquired in PART 1 and examining the artworks under the following headings:

- Historical Context
- Material Culture
- Iconography
- Art Analysis (see Table 1:3 - Visual Analysis of the Artworks)

Findings and Analysis

Examination of the theological knowledge and understanding found through the study of both the text and the artworks will be analysed.

By examining the meaning of the Lukan text (exegesis) and determining the hermeneutic (the meaning of the text for the Early Renaissance and for the contemporary Australian artists) it is hoped that the distinctive interpretations of the

Annunciation event in the different periods of history and their contexts will come into sharp focus. The integration of the research findings on the Lukan author and the artists' interpretation of that event could provide a nuanced perspective on the Annunciation. By comparing and contrasting each of the artworks and the text, it is possible that different understandings of the chosen pericope may evolve as artists' interpretations are influenced by their respective historical context. Thus, Ricoeur's method reflects this research's meaning of "integration" as it is applied to the approach

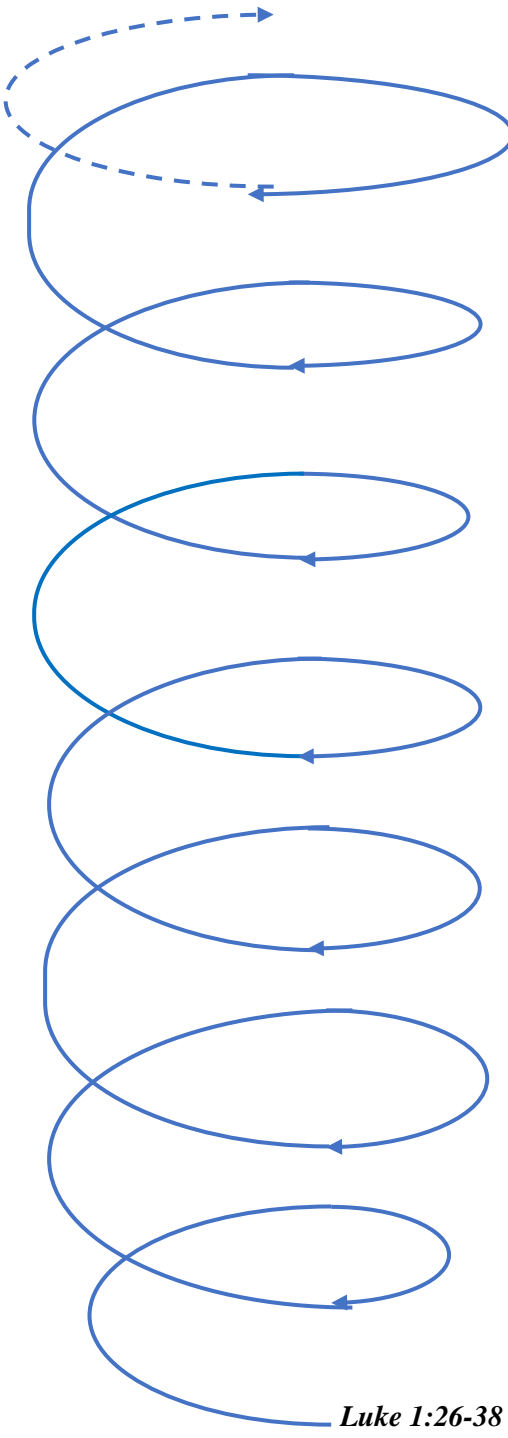
Paul Ricoeur explored the practice of "methods of interpretation as an arc leading from an initial situation and understanding to broadened understanding, both of the interpreter and the world as a world we can imagine ourselves as inhabiting."² However, Ricoeur's arc proved to be too limiting for this research as there is an implied or assumed end to the understanding of a theological concept. The following process was therefore adapted from Brueggemann's approach he developed when studying the psalms.³ The spiral in the following diagram shows the process of understanding of the text or image from the pre-critical (this the first reading or viewing) presentation of the text or image as a basic narrative. It then moves on to the subsequent stages of appropriation to critical reflection (understanding what the text or image means). From the critical understanding of the text or image based on explanation, it moves to the 'understanding' of the text or art, the post-critical phase.⁴ This is due to the appropriation of meaning in light of the new-found knowledge or understanding. As knowledge and understanding of the pericope through the art and text are acquired, these are reapplied to each stage. A spiral of informed understanding and knowledge continues expanding on the understanding of the Annunciation. This in turn, it is anticipated, will generate new ideas, applications and questions and therefore provide a more complete critical inquiry. After gathering and evaluating information and ideas from multiple perspectives, a well-reasoned analysis and interpretation is produced for this research with the potential for further research in the future.

² David Pellauer, Bernard Dauenhauer, and Edward N. Zalta (ed.), "Paul Ricoeur," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition). <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ricoeur/>.

³ Brueggemann uses the lineal model of first orientation, then disorientation to a new orientation. Walter Brueggemann, *Spirituality of the Psalms* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 9-11.

⁴ Brueggemann, *Spirituality Psalms*, 14-15.

Table 2:2 - Hermeneutical Spiral

<p>HERMENEUTICAL ASCENDING SPIRAL <i>Ever Increasing Knowledge and Understanding</i></p>	<p>Stages of Development of Knowledge and Understanding</p>
 <p><i>Luke 1:26-38</i></p>	<p><i>Open to Further Study in the Future</i></p> <p>Final Stage for <u>this research</u>: Analysis After gathering and evaluating information and ideas from multiple perspectives, an analysis and interpretation is produced, which is open to further study in the future.</p> <p>Stage 7: In light of this new-found knowledge and understanding, reconsider the text and all the artworks.</p> <p>Stage 6: <i>Post-Critical Phase</i> Taking this compiled knowledge and understanding reconsider the original Koine Greek</p> <p>Stage 5: <i>Critical Phase</i> Compare and contrast the text and all the artworks for their depicted theological content and focus through historical criticism</p> <p>Stage 4: Compare and contrast all artworks with the original text through historical criticism.</p> <p>Stage 3: Interpret Luke 1:26-38 by using historical criticism to gain an understanding of the theological focus in the context in the Early Renaissance and Contemporary. Examine all artworks in the historical context in which they were created.</p>

	<p>Stage 2: Interpret the original text of Luke 1:26-38 by using historical criticism to gain an understanding of the original context behind the composition of the Lukan Gospel.</p> <p>Stage 1: <i>Pre-critical Phase</i> Original Koine Greek text of Luke 1:26-38 or examination of artworks as a basic narrative.</p>
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Overview of the Exegesis of the Text

Koine Greek was studied to understand the text as it was originally written. The text was examined using historical criticism to gain an understanding of the origins of the text and the “world behind the text.” Ian Howard Marshall's approach to historical criticism will be used so that the study of the narrative that purports to convey historical information to determine what happened and is described or alluded to in the passage in question, is then critically assessed. The critical studies of the New Testament, which involve more than historical criticism, examine the historical process of both events described and the reading and production of the text. This method of interpretation of the Annunciation aided the research by providing an historical context for the event and facilitated investigation into its deeper meanings.

Overview of the Exegesis of the Artworks

Study of the text Luke 1:26-38 in this research is supported by material from two different eras. The Early Renaissance material comes from both Valencia (where Nicolás Falcó was painting) and Ghent (where the Rothschild Prayer Book was most likely written and illuminated). The artworks will be examined for their interpretation of the Annunciation guided by Viladesau’s approach in which he states:

The theological-aesthetic appreciation of a work of art involves a complex hermeneutical interaction among the artist, the work, and the viewer or hearer, along with the life-context of each. These elements may be present to varying degrees and may interact in different ways in constituting mediation of transcendence.

Viladesau also points out that in order to grasp the truth and meaning of a work it may require what Baxendale calls the “period point of view” (i.e. insight arising from the work's original life context) whilst recognising Van der Leeuw’s idea that, “works of art do possess their own life: they perhaps mean something very different to him who receives them than to him who created them.”⁵

For this research “life context” was understood as the purpose for which the artwork was created. Using the information gained from the nominated key visual literacy elements for the artworks, the depictions of the Annunciation can be understood from both Baxendall’s “period point of view” or insight arising from the work's original life context; and Van der Leeuw’s perspective of the viewer’s understanding compared with the artist’s depiction.

The artworks were examined in detail as per the following table, under the headings: Historical Context, Material Culture, and Iconography and Art Analysis. This information acquired from the examination of each artwork was then compared and contrasted against each artwork and the text of the Annunciation itself, to reveal an understanding of the scriptural event. The ideas gained from the text and each of the artworks and the different historical contexts in which they were created was then integrated. Thus, the knowledge that was accumulated at each stage was used to build on as a newer and even greater understanding of the Annunciation pericope developed, that spiralled upwards and outwards.

⁵ Richard Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty and Art* (New York: Oxford University Press (US), 1999), 147.

Table 2:3 – Visual Analysis of the Artworks ⁶

<p style="text-align: center;">Material Culture and Iconography</p>	<p>Context - How does the artwork relate to a particular time, place, culture and society in which it was produced?</p> <p>When was it made? Where was it made? Who made it? Who was the work made for? Who was the artist? How does the work relate to other art of the time? Does the work relate to the social or political history of the time? Can the artwork be linked to other art of the period? The artwork's relationship to other areas of knowledge.</p> <p>Process – How the work was made and what techniques were used?</p> <p>Attributes Colours Emblems Symbols, signs and motifs How is the iconography to be interpreted?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Analysis of Art Form and Composition</p>	<p>Form - the examination of the formal elements of the artwork addressing the following questions:</p> <p>What is the medium of the work? Which colours does the artist use? Why? How has the colour been organised? What kind of shapes or forms are present?</p>

⁶ Table 1 is a compilation from the following university and museum websites: Terry Barrett, "Criticizing Art: Understanding the Contemporary," Mayfield Publishing Company, https://www.uwgb.edu/mallok/art_criticism_and_formal_analysi.htm.; Monash University, "How Do I Structure My Visual Analysis?," Monash University, <http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/artdesign/writing/1.3.xml>.; The J. Paul Getty Museum, "Elements of Art," The J. Paul Getty Museum, http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/formal_analysis.html http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/elements_art.pdf. Duke University, "Visual Analysis," Duke University, <https://twp.duke.edu/sites/twp.duke.edu/files/file-attachments/visual-analysis.original.pdf>.

	<p>What kind of marks or techniques are used by the artist? What is the surface like? What kinds of textures can be seen? Physical size of the artwork? Purpose of the artwork?</p> <p>Mood or atmosphere – how the artist has created a certain atmosphere of feeling. How does the work make the viewer feel? Can you answer this? Only from your own point of view Why would the viewer possibly feel this way? How does the colour, texture, form or theme of the work affect the viewer's mood? Compositional questions like, the shapes that lead the eye around the artwork, the use of light and dark? What do they say about the relationships between those depicted?</p>
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Literature Review Relevant to the Research Task

Theological Aesthetic

Edward Farley's book *Faith and Beauty: A Theological Aesthetic* discussed the understanding of beauty held by theologians and art historians which helped in the context of this study.⁷ Richard Viladesau's book *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty and Art* is used in the examination of the artworks being considered as it declares aesthetics as a source for theology.⁸ Furthermore, his comprehensive explanation of the theological hermeneutical theories of Gadamer, and others, helped direct this research in understanding the artworks. *Theology and The Arts: Encountering God Through Music, Art and Rhetoric* also by Richard Viladesau has two chapters especially relevant to this research study.⁹ In Chapter 2 the author discusses the history of art and the ever-changing point of view and in Chapter 3 in which the author explores artworks as the locus of faith – this is particularly relevant

⁷ Edward Farley, *Faith and Beauty: A Theological Aesthetic* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2001).

⁸ Richard Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts: Encountering God through Music, Art and Rhetoric* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000).

⁹ Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts*.

to the artworks from the Middle Ages being explored in this research.¹⁰ The author also examines the ways in which art enters into theology and theology into art throughout the book. *A Cultural Study of Mary and the Annunciation: from Luke to the Enlightenment* by Gary Waller contributed to discussions on the understanding of the Gospel of Luke and significance of the sacred image to theological understanding.¹¹ Also, George W. Ferguson's *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* and Gertrude Sill's *A Handbook of Symbols in Christian Art* and Margaret Manion and Bernard J. Muir's *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship* were important in this research in understanding the sign and symbols in each of the artworks.¹²

Hermeneutics

When considering the hermeneutics for this research, scholarly works that are traditionally expected to be part of this type of exegetical study were included, such as *Theology after Ricoeur: New Directions in Hermeneutical Theology*, as well as more recently published works such as *Opening Up the Scriptures: Joseph Ratzinger and The Foundations of Biblical Interpretation* by Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI).¹³ The combination of information also presented in *How Do Catholics Read the Bible?, Truly Our Sister* and various Mariological papal documents as well as *Text-Critical and Hermeneutical Studies in The Septuagint* added to background knowledge of hermeneutics.¹⁴ From these combined works, an interpretative understanding and approach was developed for studying the pericope of the

¹⁰ Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts*.

¹¹ Gary Waller, *A Cultural Study of Mary and the Annunciation: From Luke to the Enlightenment*, (London; New York: Routledge, 2015). online resource.

¹² George Wells Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), electronic resource; Gertrude Grace Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols in Christian Art*, 1st Touchstone ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1975) ; Margaret. M. Manion and Bernard. J. Muir, *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998).

¹³ Dan R. Stiver, *Theology after Ricoeur: New Directions in Hermeneutical Theology*, 1st ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); José. Granados et al., *Opening up the Scriptures: Joseph Ratzinger and the Foundations of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008).

¹⁴ Daniel J. Harrington SJ, *How Do Catholics Read the Bible?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), electronic resource; Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints* (New York; London: Continuum, 2006). as well as *Lumen Gentium* by Pope Paul VI on 21 November 1964, *Fulgens Corona* by Pope Pius XII on 8 September 1953 - an encyclical establishing the perpetual virginity of Mary, *Ad Caeli Reginam* –by Pope Pius XII, on 11 October 1954. This encyclical established the feast Queenship of Mary and *Redemptoris Mater* – Pope John Paul II delivered this encyclical on 25 March 1987. Johann Cook and Hermann-Josef Stipp, *Vetus Testamentum, Supplements: Text-Critical and Hermeneutical Studies in the Septuagint (1)* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2012), electronic resource.

Annunciation. *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* has a chapter on hermeneutics by Brown and Schneiders that provided a more contemporary understanding of the Annunciation.¹⁵ In the book *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives* Pope Benedict XVI succinctly compares and contrasts the infancy narratives in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew.¹⁶ His examination of the historical accuracy of the narratives, the many classic and expected Augustinian interpretations of the Church and eschatology, as well as acknowledging the roots of his hermeneutic in Greek religious literature before considering the contemporary relevance of the Annunciation, helped form a more rounded understanding of the Annunciation for this research.

Historical Context of Europe

Werner Schwarz's chapter "In the Traditional View" of *Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation: Some Reformation Controversies and Their Background*, provided a general understanding of the historical context of Europe at the time in which the selected artworks were created.¹⁷

Oberman's *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism*, was a primary source for understanding the historical context of Flanders at the end of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.¹⁸ Also, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* provided a basic contextual background for the theology of the Annunciation in Flanders.¹⁹

Early email communications with Profesor Albert Hauf Valls, an expert in the field of theology in Spain directed my studies to include many works specific to Valencia.²⁰ Among these, *The Fabric of Marian Devotion in Isabel de Villena's Vita Christi* by

¹⁵ Raymond E. Brown and Sandra M. Schneiders, "Hermeneutics," in *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990).

¹⁶ Benedict XVI and Whitmore, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 3.

¹⁷ Werner Schwarz, "In the Traditional View," in *Principles and Problems of Biblical Translation: Some Reformation Controversies and Their Background* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1955).

¹⁸ Heiko A. Oberman, "Mariology," in *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963).

¹⁹ Donna Spivey Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, c2001).

²⁰ Albert Hauf Valls, Email, 19 June 2018.

Lesley Twomey, gave an insight to the devotions relating to Mary and the historical context in which she was revered.²¹ As well as Rosanna Cantavella's work "Intellectual, Contemplative, Administrator Isabel De Villena and the Vindication of Women" helped to identify the challenges faced by the community of Valencia.²²

Historical Context of Contemporary Australia

Finding theologians whose thoughts and ideas that were unique to Australia in the late twentieth century presented many challenges for this research. Advances in technology, easier and more economically viable opportunities for international travel and trade, contributed to exposing Australian society and academia to the theological ideas and attitudes that were also being discussed in other parts of the Western World. The Thomas More Centre has been publishing *AD2000- Magazine* since April 1988 and has copies of publications since its inception.²³ These provided a general insight to theological issues of the time. "Landing the Sacred" was a paper presented at the conference "A Grain of Eternity: 1997 Australian International Religion, Literature and the Arts" in Sydney in 1997 by Noel Rowe.²⁴ It also provided a general understanding of the historical context and environment in which the contemporary Australian artworks were created. However, *Sign and Promise: A Theology of the Church for a Changing World* by John Thornhill clearly outlined the challenges the Church [in Australia] was facing in the post-Vatican II world.²⁵ His writings, as an Australian theologian, discuss the role of Mary and the Church.

²¹ Lesley K. Twomey, *The Fabric of Marian Devotion in Isabel De Villena's Vita Christi* (Woodbridge, UK: Tamesis, 2013).

²² Rosanna Cantavella, "Intellectual, Contemplative, Administrator: Isabel De Villena and the Vindication of Women," in *A Companion to Spanish Women's Studies*, ed. Xon de Ros and Geraldine Hazbun (London: Thames, 2011).

²³ <http://www.ad2000.com.au/index.html>

²⁴ Noel Rowe, "Landing the Sacred" (paper presented at the A Grain of Eternity: 1997 Australian International Religion, Literature and the Arts, Sydney, 1997).

²⁵ John Thornhill, *Sign and Promise: A Theology of the Church for a Changing World* (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1988).

Chapter III: Exegesis of the Text

Historical Criticism of Luke 1:26-38: World of the Text

Historical Period

In the opening of his gospel, the Lukan author chooses a significant historical marker to establish the historicity of Jesus' birth by chronologically associating the reign of King Herod the Great with the arrival of the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a small town in Galilee (Lk 1:5, 26). Herod was a client ruler of the Roman Empire, a satellite king of Judea¹ who had none of David's royal blood and was not a Jew but an Edomite.²

Characterisation of Gabriel

Gabriel (or in Hebrew גַּבְרִיאֵל, gavri'el) is not called an archangel in the Bible and is one of three named good angels in the Bible. Gabriel appears in both the Old and New Testaments and in accordance with his name meaning the Power of God is described as "great", "might", "power", and "strength." He is regarded by the Jews as the angel of judgement but in the Christian tradition, he is regarded as the angel of mercy, and the angel of the Incarnation.³

In Jewish tradition the angel Gabriel represents fire and as such he was commissioned to rescue Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael from the fiery furnace (Pes. 118a; Ex. R. xviii and 4 Macc 16:20-22). By virtue of his title as the Prince of Fire, Gabriel is also prince of the ripening of fruits and as an angel representing an element of nature he is also associated with the metals: Gabriel is gold (the colour of fire) and when depicted girded like a metal-worker, he shows Moses how to make the candlestick.⁴ Among his many skills is his ability to fly, but while Michael reaches the earth in one flight, Gabriel requires two.⁵ Gabriel often works together with Michael who is considered

¹ Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1968), 67,121,694.

² Willis C. Newman, *Luke, John, and Acts: Background, Outline and Commentary* (Tacoma WA, USA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2010), 27.

³ Hugh Pope, "St Gabriel the Archangel," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Kevin Knight (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909).

⁴ Solomon Schechter, Ludwig Blau, and Emil G. Hirsch, "Gabriel (Γαβριήλ, "Man of God");," in *JewishEncyclopedia.com* (New York; London: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1901), 540-43.

⁵ Cf. Wojciech Kosior, "The Angel in the Hebrew Bible from the Statistic and Hermeneutic Perspectives. Some Remarks on the Interpolation Theory," *The Polish Journal of Biblical Research* 12, no. June (2013): 56.

greater than Gabriel. Together, Michael and Gabriel defend Israel against its accusers, and for its deliverance from captivity as well as pray for the human race in general. Michael, as the guardian angel of Israel and high priest of heaven, is more occupied in heaven. Gabriel is set over the serpents, over paradise and the cherubim in heaven. Gabriel executes God's will on earth and is the messenger of God.⁶ In the Old Testament Gabriel communicates a prophecy regarding “Messiah the Prince” to Daniel (Dan 9:26). He tells Zechariah that John the Baptist will be a forerunner before the Lord (Lk 1:17). Most eminently, he tells Mary that her son will be called “the Son of the Most High” (Lk 1:32). Gabriel first appears in Daniel 8:16 when “a man’s voice” commands Daniel to explain a vision to the prophet.⁷ In Luke 1:26-38 there is no physical description of Gabriel other than being identified as an angel. In popular art and culture Gabriel is depicted with wings which probably refers to Daniel 9:21 which describes Gabriel’s “flight.” Nevertheless, there is no mention in Scripture of the presence or absence of wings. Gabriel’s appearance instils fear for when Daniel meets Gabriel, he is frightened and falls on his face (Dan 8:18). When he greets Zechariah, his first words are, “Do not be afraid” (Lk 1:13).⁸ However, his greeting to Mary, “Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.” (Χαῖρε, κεχαριτωμένη ὁ κύριος μετὰ σοῦ) (Lk 1:28) is more celebratory, but Gabriel still follows on, telling her not to fear (Lk 1:30).⁹ Jerome however, translated this expression from Greek into Latin as “*Ave, gratia plena*” which in English translates from the Latin as “full of grace”. This translation was the basis of both dogma and devotion prior to the Reformation and remains as the devotional preference for modern-day Catholics, despite it being superseded when translated from the Greek to English by such alternatives as “rejoice,

⁶ Schechter, Blau, and Hirsch, "Gabriel."

⁷ Cf. When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I tried to understand it. Then someone appeared standing before me, having the appearance of a man, and I heard a human voice by the Ulai, calling, “Gabriel, help this man understand the vision” (Dan 8:16).

⁸ In the phrase “... ‘Do not be afraid, Zechariah’ [εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ ἄγγελος· Μὴ φοβοῦ, Ζαχαρία] - the Lukan author uses the verb *phóbēō* φοβοῦ, which means to be alarmed; or to be in awe of, i.e. revere: - be afraid; be cowardly. The word for fear in this context has a different meaning as the one used in this line of the pericope. It can mean also “awe; to be filled with awe.” James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words of the Hebrew Bible and the Greek Testament*, (Also available at Logos Bible Software, 2009).

⁹ The word *χαίρω* translates as either (a) I rejoice, c. cognate acc. or c. dat., I rejoice exceedingly; (b) in the imperative, *χαῖρε, χαίρετε* a greeting, farewell, Christianised in Phil. 3:1, 4:4, by the addition *ἐν κυρίῳ* (and generally mistranslated), cf. *χαίρειν*, imperatival infin., e.g. Ac. 15:23 (cf. 2 John 10); also hail! in Mk. 15:18, Mt. 27:29; Alexander Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press. Also available at Logos Bible Software, 1917). electronic resource; also “#5463 *χαίρω* chairō, khah’ee-ro; a prim. verb; to be “cheer” ful, i.e. calmly happy or well-off; impersonal, impersonally. especially as salutation (on meeting or parting), be well: —farewell, be glad, God speed, greeting, hail, joy (-fully), rejoice.” James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words of the Hebrew Bible and the Greek Testament*.

you who enjoys God's favour!"¹⁰ The word *chaíro* χαίρω translates as either (a) *I rejoice, I rejoice exceedingly* or (b) in the imperative, *chaíre* χαῖρε, *chaírete* χαίρετε. In Zechariah 9:9¹¹ and Zephaniah 3:14¹² the Hebrew word for rejoice¹³ is used. This word translates into Koine Greek as *chaíro* χαίρω. In these contexts, Israel's prophets talk about the joy that would be brought by the promised Messiah to the people of Israel. It is also a greeting or "farewell."¹⁴ In the Septuagint, it is used as an announcement of messianic joy (Zeph 3:14; Joel 2:21; Zech 9:9; Lam 4:21). In other Gospels, it is used as "hail"¹⁵ (Mk 15:18; and Mt 27:29) when saluting someone of higher social status or rank than the one proposing the greeting. For example: "And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Mk 15:18) and "... and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Mt. 27:29). Gabriel's use of this word indicates his acknowledgement of, and reverence for, Mary's royal status: Mary becomes the Davidic Queen-Mother because Jesus, as

¹⁰ Waller, *A Cultural Study of Mary and the Annunciation: From Luke to the Enlightenment*. 39.

¹¹ "Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!"

¹² "Sing aloud, O daughter Zion, shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem!" (Zech 9:9)

¹³ ["לָּ] vb. rejoice — Qal 1. *rejoice* — Qal 1. rejoice. a. abs.; b. c. ָ; c. with 2 ַל. tremble." Richard Whitaker et al., *The Abridged Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (Houghton Mifflin Company. Also available at Logos Bible Software, 1906).

¹⁴ Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*; also see Phil 3:1 "Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord."

¹⁵ Christianised in Phil. 3:1, 4:4 by the addition ἐν κυρίῳ cf. χαίρειν, imperatival infin., e.g. Ac. 15:23 (cf. 2 John 10). Strong's Concise Dictionary of the Words of the Hebrew Bible and the Greek Testament #5399. However, Green suggests that it is an invitation to rejoice and when combined with 'favoured one' form an alliteration in Greek. The conjoining of the two motifs of God acting graciously and people responding with praise and joy are interwoven throughout the gospel. Joel B Green, "The Purpose and Theology of the Gospel of Luke," in *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1997), 86.

the son of David (Lk 1:26, 1:31), becomes the Davidic King.¹⁶ Because Mary is the mother of the Son of God, the mother of the Word Incarnate, her position is elevated to Gabriel's position within the heavenly hierarchy. Mary is therefore, Queen-Mother of Israel,¹⁷ of the Church and of Heaven.¹⁸ Using this form of greeting,¹⁹ Gabriel delivers his message with reverence and humility and acknowledges Mary as his superior.²⁰

Thus, it makes sense if the word χαίρω is used, and in this context, it would mean to be in awe or reverence. Therefore, the angel's salutation could be translated as, "Hail [you] who are favoured by being filled with grace! ... Do not be in awe [of me], for it is *you*²¹ who have found favour with God."

¹⁶ "In the Old Testament the *"gebirah,"* or Queen-Mother enjoyed a pre-eminent position in the kingdom due to the practical difficulties created by the monarch's practice of polygamy. Thus, the mother of the royal son held great prestige and influence and examples include Queen-Mother Bathsheba, mother of King Solomon (I Kgs 2:19) and the Queen-Mother of Balthasar (Dan. 5:10-12)." George F. Kirwin, "Queenship of Mary - Queen-Mother," *Marian Library Studies* 28, no. Article 6 (2007): 64; Elizabeth confirms Mary's royal status in her greeting, "... that the mother of my Lord comes to me?" Cf. Luke 1:43b "*Lord*" used in this context refers to the Lord of Israel; see A Concise Dictionary of the Words in Greek – # 2961 κυριεύω kuriēuō, koo-ree-yoo'-o; from 2962; to rule: — have dominion over, lord, be lord of, exercise lordship over. 2962. κύριος kuriōs, koo'-ree-os; from κύρος kurōs (supremacy); supreme in authority, i.e. (as noun) controller; by impl. Mr. (as a respectful title):—God, Lord, master, Sir 2963. κυριότης kuriōtēs, koo-ree-ot'-ace; from 2962; mastery, i.e. (concr. and coll.) rulers: —dominion, government; also, in *A Pocket Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* - κύριος (dominus), (a) an owner of property, particularly of slaves (δοῦλοι), a lord, master (cf. 1 Pet 3:6): plur. οἱ κύριοι (domini), master and mistress, Mt 15:27, Lk 19:33, Acts 16:16, 19, and perhaps elsewhere; (b) weaker sense, in the vocative, as a polite address, κύριε, sir! κύριοι, gentlemen, sirs, Acts 16:30, cf. κυρία; (c) of Divine beings, κύριος, Lord, without article, generally refers to God, whereas ὁ κύριος, the Lord, generally refers to Jesus, the Messiah (cf. Ac. 2:34). In this sense the word connotes that these Divine Beings are absolute rulers (kings) of the whole world, and that we are their slaves (subjects). As the term was also applied to oriental sovereigns and to the Roman Emperors (particularly frequently in Nero's case) in the same sense, it focussed the deadly rivalry between the two powers (cf. Acts 25:26). Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*.

¹⁷ Edward P. Sri, *Queen Mother: A Biblical Theology of Mary's Queenship*, (Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2005). electronic resource.

¹⁸ CCC 964 Mary's role in the Church is inseparable from her union with Christ and flows directly from it. "This union of the mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ's virginal conception up to his death"

¹⁹ Byrne makes the observation in Luke 1:12 that, "Where Zechariah had been troubled by the angelic apparition, what troubles Mary is the content of this greeting." Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel* (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls Publications, 2015), 33.

²⁰ Byrne discusses the fact that the way Gabriel explains how the conception is to come about makes clear who the child's father will be. Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel*, 34.

²¹ Italics used for emphasis only.

Was she disturbed and embarrassed by the extravagance of the salutation “full of grace”?²² If this was the case it would explain why Mary was described as being ‘perplexed’²³ and ‘pondering’ [ἡ δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ διεταράχθη καὶ διελογίζετο ποταπὸς εἴη ὁ ἀσπασμὸς οὗτος] (Lk 1:29).

In the Book of Daniel, the significance of the angel Gabriel's appearance is prefigured (Dan 8:15-16) and the angel's announcement to Zechariah (Lk 1:19) closely parallels his announcements to Daniel. The name Gabriel in Luke 1:19, 26 would be enough to alert any reader familiar with the Jewish Scriptures because Gabriel's name only occurs twice in them (Dan 8:16; 9: 21) and on both occasions Gabriel's mission is to explain the importance of the understanding of a prophecy about the liberation of Israel and the dawning of a new age. The Lukan author's use of many and varied literary devices, such as the epigraphs used in the close verbal similarities between the opening of the Lukan gospel (Lk 1:1) and these chapters of Daniel, leave no doubt that Luke is deliberately making reference to the Book of Daniel in which Gabriel interprets and explains the vision that Daniel had for Israel.²⁴ Congruently, the proclamations of the angel to Gideon in Judges 6:11-24 closely parallels the angel Gabriel's proclamations to Mary in Luke 1:26-38.

Judges 6:12: “The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, “The LORD is with you”

Luke 1:28: “And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.”

²² Thomas Weinandy notes “Gabriel does not address Mary by name. Rather, his greeting is by way of a declaration— she is hailed as, and so decreed to be, the one “full of grace.” Being full of grace entails a reciprocal relational causality. Because Mary is full of grace, “the Lord is with” her, and because the Lord is with her, she is full of grace. The act by which Mary is full of grace, the indwelling presence of the Lord within her, is the same act by which the Lord is with her. The Lord is not simply present “to” Mary, as two persons are present to one another, but the Lord resides fully within her, for she interiorly possesses the fullness of grace, which is the full interior presence of God. Although “Mary” is her name, who she actually is, as declared by Gabriel, is the one who possesses the fullness of grace, the one in whom resides the fullness of the Lord's presence. Thus being full of grace assumes the status of a title or even a name and so entails the defining characteristic of who Mary is. The woman called “Mary” can rightly and simply be addressed as ‘full of grace.’ ” Thomas G. Weinandy, *Jesus Becoming Jesus: A Theological Interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels* (Washington, D. C: Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 7-8.

²³ Luke Timothy Johnson, however understands the word perplexed to mean “utterly confused” and is tempted to translate it mean “terrified.” Luke Timothy Johnson, "Translations, Notes, Interpretation: The Prophecy of Jesus' Birth (1:26-38)," in *The Gospel of Luke*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington SJ (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991).

²⁴ John McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975), online resource, 31-52.

Judges 6:17: "If now I have found favour with you, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me.

Luke 1:34: "Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

Furthermore, Gabriel's announcement to Mary alludes to Nathan's proclamations as demonstrated in the following:

2 Samuel 7:12: "I will preserve the offspring of your body after you, and make his sovereignty secure. I will be a father to him and he a son to me."

Luke 1:32 ff: "He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High."

2 Samuel 7:16b: "Your throne will be established forever:"

Luke 1:32 ff: "The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David."

2 Samuel 7:16a: "Your house and your sovereignty will always stand secure before me.

Luke 1:32-33a: "He will rule forever over the house of Jacob."

2 Samuel 7:13: "I will make his royal throne secure forever."

Luke 1:33b: "And his reign will have no end."

The use of Gabriel's name is significant for he is known for bearing good news of the much-awaited Messiah.²⁵

Characterisation of Mary

In the Lukan account of the Annunciation there are no details of what Mary was doing at the time of the appearance of Gabriel and the announcement that she was to become the mother of the Messiah. Nor are there any details of Mary's age or circumstances. It has culturally and traditionally been assumed that she would have been a young girl/woman of marriageable age, which was just before puberty but usually between twelve or thirteen years old.²⁶

In the chosen pericope, the announcement to Mary by the angel Gabriel occurred in Nazareth. The timing of which is taken from Luke 1:5 that mentioned Herod King of

²⁵ The following verses illustrate Gabriel's role as a messenger Dan 2:31-45; Lk 1:15-17, 26-38.

²⁶ Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Dangerous Memories: A Mosaic of Mary in Scripture: Drawn from Truly Our Sister* (New York; London: Continuum, 2006), online resource, 14.

Judea, which historically places the event during the Roman occupation of Israel. It is presumed by many scholars, that Mary was a Jewish woman of low social and economic standing, because of where she lived, Nazareth.²⁷ Nazareth was a small out of the way farming town in Galilee situated off the main road of commercial travel.²⁸ Just behind Nazareth ran the great high road across a plain, known in the days of Isaiah as “the way of the sea” which stretched from the port in Acre (Ptolemais) to Damascus. Caravans travelled from Damascus to Judea and Egypt and passed through Israel not far from the base of the Nazareth hill. Levi Khamor states that the Roman roads along the coast linked Berytus, Sidon, Tyre and Acre through Sepphoris past the hills surrounding Nazareth, then to Samaria, Jerusalem and on to the south. Not far away were caravans travelling with Syrians, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Jews, Gileadites, Idumeans and Roman legions. Amidst these roadways and byways and about fifteen gently rounded hills was Nazareth, nestled on top of the highest hill with the most scenic vantage point.²⁹ Nazareth’s location was poetically likened by Quaresimus to a rose, “... and like a rose it has the same rounded form, enclosed by mountains as the flower by its leaves.”³⁰ The surrounding hills kept Nazareth secluded and protected from the military and commercial traffic below.³¹ It could be therefore concluded that the environment in which Mary lived was relatively safe albeit poor.³²

²⁷ John T. Carroll notes that “ironically, while she is waiting to gain in (ascribed) honor by marriage into a household that stands in David’s line, she learns from a divine messenger that her status reversal will come instead from the identity of her son—and from God’s choice and initiative.” John T. Carroll, *Luke: A Commentary*, First ed. (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 39.; Johnson, *Dangerous Memories*, 13; Elizabeth A Johnson, "Mary of Nazareth: Friend of God and Prophet," *America-New York* 182, no. 21 (2000): 335, 39; also James D. Tabor, *The Jesus Dynasty: The Hidden History of Jesus, His Royal Family, and the Birth of Christianity*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006). electronic resource. 87.

²⁸ Johnson, *Dangerous Memories*, 12.

²⁹ Levi Khamor, *The Revelation of the Son of Man*, (Petersham, Massachusetts: St. Bede's, 1992). electronic resource; also, the significance of Nazareth being likened to a flower is discussed in Robert J. Karris and Cindy J. Ventrice, *Commentary of the Gospel of Luke : Chapters 1-8* (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2001), 52-53.

³⁰ Francis H. Dunwell, *A Commentary on the Authorized English Version of the Gospel According to St John*, (London: J. T. Hayes, 1872), <https://books.google.com.au/books?id=jWX7bhkrxOMC>. electronic resource. 34.

³¹ Khamor, *The Revelation of the Son of Man*. Loc 2268-77.

³² Johnson states that “To date, nothing that indicates wealth has been uncovered in Nazareth: no public paved roads or civic buildings, no inscriptions, no decorative frescoes or mosaics, no luxury items such as perfume bottles or even simple glass.” Johnson, "Mary of Nazareth," 331. Furthermore, “During the period of Roman occupation, Galilean villagers were triply taxed. They had to pay the traditional tithe for the Temple in Jerusalem, tribute to the Roman emperor, and a third tax to the local Jewish client-king through whom Rome ruled by proxy.” Johnson, "Mary of Nazareth," 334.

In the Mediterranean culture of the New Testament, it is the value of *being* that dominates the value of *doing*.³³ Mary's virginity – her physical integrity – was also utmost in terms of the value of being in Palestine (which was also under Roman rule). In the pericope of the Lukan Annunciation, Mary is identified as *being* a virgin and declared “full of grace.”³⁴ In this state of *being* Mary is told that she “will conceive in her womb and give birth to a son.”³⁵ Thus, the narrative instead either focuses on or alludes to, *who* and *what* Mary is, which is “a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David” (Lk 1:27) rather than her socio-economic status.

At the angel Gabriel's salutation, Mary does not become alarmed or terrified as others in Scripture often do when they personally encounter these celestial beings. Instead, her response to Gabriel's statement was that she was “... much perplexed by his words” and that she pondered “what sort of greeting this might be” (Lk 1:26). Scholars interpret this perplexed state and pondering in many ways but most often as either evidence of her great piety and humility and therefore faith seeking understanding.³⁶ Or Mary's response could be caution or hesitation as she seeks clarification because she is wary of the celestial visitor. Thus, her question, “How can this be, since I am a

³³ John J. Pilch, *Biblical Social Values and Their Meaning: A Handbook*, ed. Bruce J. Malina (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 3.

³⁴ The word “*kecharitomene*” (κεχαριτωμένη) means “full of grace.” “Because the verb is also a participle, Mary is shown to be chosen for a long time past; God's full flow of favour has already been concentrating upon her.” Stuhlmüller, “According to Luke,” 44:31.

³⁵ Regarding the verb relating to Mary being “full of grace” H. W. Smyth defines the perfect tense as “completed action with a permanent result.” Herbert W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), 413. Origen notes, “Again I turn the matter over in my mind and ask why, when God had decided that the Savior should be born of a virgin, he chose not a girl who was not betrothed, but precisely one who was already betrothed. Unless I am mistaken, this is the reason. The Savior ought to have been born of a virgin who was not only betrothed but, as Matthew writes, had already been given to her husband, although he had not yet had relations with her. Otherwise, if the Virgin were seen growing big with a child, the state of virginity itself would be a cause of disgrace.” Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, 24; Origen and Joseph T. Lienhard, *Homilies on Luke: Fragments on Luke*, vol. 94, Series: The Fathers of the Church (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1996).

³⁶ Cf. Stuhlmüller, “According to Luke,” 44:31.

virgin?" (Lk 1:34)³⁷ could be understood as testing the angel to see what kind of spirit³⁸ it is, if it is from God, by asking such a question.³⁹

Alternatively, the question may be asked, "Why was she concerned about conceiving a child?" Was she infertile? She was not old. In fact, it seems Mary was in prime condition and age to conceive a son. She was not unwed, because she was already betrothed to Joseph, a bond of betrothal so strong that she was already called the "wife" of Joseph (Mt 1:20).⁴⁰ Surely, she was not so naïve, at least for ancient times, to not understand that marriage was directed to the bearing of children. She does not refer to the past, but by using the present tense implies her present and persevering intention. One possible explanation is that Mary did not enter into a natural marriage with Joseph. In the apocryphal Protoevangelium of James, Anna offers her child Mary, to the Lord and because Mary's virginity has already been consecrated to God, she asks this question as she is apprehensive that she would be expected to somehow break this vow.⁴¹ This vow that Joseph must have known about before he agreed to the betrothal,

³⁷ Joseph A. Fitzmyer proposes the purpose of Mary's question to the angel "is to give the Evangelist an opening for the further angelic communication about the real character of the child to be born: He will not only be the Davidic Messiah to rule over the house of Jacob, but He "will be called holy, the Son of God" (1:35). The main affirmation in the angelic declaration to Mary is thus wholly Christological." Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Virginal Conception of Jesus in the New Testament," *Theological Studies* 34, no. 4 (1973).

³⁸ God sent "evil spirits" in Judges 9:23; 1 Samuel 16:14-16; 16-23, 18:10 and 19:9; see also Raphael in the Book of Tobit, who was an angel disguised as a young man. Tobit 5:4.

³⁹ Gerd Ludemann rationalizes that this question can only be reconciled with v27 when "a fiancée can hardly be surprised at the promise of a child even if she has as yet had no sexual intercourse with her fiancé." Gerd Ludemann, *Virgin Birth? The Real Story of Mary and Her Son Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 102. Rudolf Bultmann admits that "Mary's question" is "an absurd one for a bride." Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh, Revised ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), 295.

⁴⁰ Byrne offers the idea that perhaps Mary would be expected to "bring forward the time of her marriage to Joseph – something which in that culture would hardly be within her power?" Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel*, 34. Furthermore, McKnight points this out in, *The Real Mary*, that a betrothed woman was legally married, and it is for this reason, relations between her and another man were considered adultery (Deuteronomy 22: 25–27). Scot McKnight, *The Real Mary: Why Evangelical Christians Can Embrace the Mother of Jesus* (Brewster MA: Paraclete Press, 2007). This idea is reiterated by Fitzmyer in Fitzmyer, "The Virginal Conception of Jesus in the New Testament," 343-44.

⁴¹ In the "Protoevangelium of James," in *The Infancy Gospel of James* (Arizona State University). Chapter 4 (2) it states that Anna consecrated her child to the service of God, "And Anna said, 'As the Lord God lives, whether I give birth to either a male or a female child, I will bring it as an offering to the Lord my God and it will be a servant to him all the days of its life.' Just as Samuel's mother Hannah vowed his life in service of God (1 Sam 1:11) Anna gave her longed for child to God too. This is the idea behind the apologetics expressed by some of the Church Fathers such as St Augustine (*Holy Virginity* 4:4 CE 401). For the biblical laws for vows of abstinence for married women see Numbers 30: 13–16.

knowing and accepting that he was expected to live with Mary under a vow of continence himself and theirs would be a chaste marital union.⁴²

The pattern with which the Lukan account of the Annunciation is told alludes to the Marian typology of other women of the Old Testament, especially those who were favoured with miraculous births, those who were ancestors of the Messiah, and those who contributed to the triumph and salvation of Israel.⁴³ However, all these women were considered barren and non-virgins. All these women conceived in the normal way, yet Mary was to conceive as a virgin and through the agency of God. In the Septuagint of the Old Testament, which is consistent with Luke 1:26-38, and the Hebrew version of Isaiah 7:14, which was translated into Greek three hundred years before Christ, *almah* always means a young girl and by implication sexually inexperienced and therefore a virgin. The Hebrew Bible principally uses two words to speak of a woman's sexual virginity: *betulah* בְּתוּלָה and refers to "a female who had begun to menstruate and was therefore marriageable" although sexually inexperienced and *almah* אִלְמָה.⁴⁴ In the Old Testament, *betulah* occurs fifty times yet *almah* occurs only rarely.⁴⁵ The word "*almah*" אִלְמָה which is a point of scholarly contention is used in Isaiah 7:14 and reads: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look! the virgin (*almah*) is with child ..." It becomes an interpretive issue for Christian theology as it is the latter that is used in Isaiah 7:14, and the passage referenced in Matthew 1:23 to describe the virgin birth of Jesus.

⁴² The evidence for the unusual abstinence of Joseph and Mary on their wedding night and during her pregnancy can be seen in Matthew 1: 25. The following authors note and discuss that there was no possibility for Joseph to be mistaken for having fathered Mary's child because he refrained from marital relations with her whilst she was pregnant: Ulrich Luz and Helmut Koester, *Matthew 21-28: A Commentary*, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 1:97; also Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich; Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2009), 90. Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, New updated ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 132.

⁴³ "Typology indicates the dynamic movement toward the fulfillment of the divine plan when "God [will] be everything to everyone." CCC 130. Sarah, Abraham's wife mother of Isaac (Gen 11:30); Rebekah, Isaac's wife mother of Jacob and Esau (Gen 25:21); Rachel, Jacob's wife gave birth to Joseph (Gen 29:31); the un-named mother of Samson, wife of Manoah (Judg. 13:2); Hannah gave birth to Samuel when she was barren (1 Sam 1:5) and the aged and barren wife of Zechariah, Elizabeth, who gave birth to John the Baptist (Luke 1:7).

⁴⁴ Justin M. Glessner, "Virgin, Virginité in the Hebrew Bible and Early Judaism," ed. John D. Barry, et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, Washington: Lexham Press. Also available at Logos Bible Software, 2012).

⁴⁵ Justin M. Glessner, electronic resource "Virgin, Virginité in the New Testament and Early Christianity," ed. John D. Barry, et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, Washington: Lexham Press. Also available at Logos Bible Software, 2012).

Whilst *betulah* most clearly expresses the idea that a woman has never been sexually active, *almah* is more ambiguous. The ambiguity of *almah* is used to argue that Matthew misunderstood Isaiah 7:14 and Jesus was not actually born of a virgin by those critical of the virgin birth.⁴⁶ However, closer scrutiny reveals that *betulah* clearly denotes a woman who has never had sexual relations as the following examples demonstrate: Leviticus 21:3: "... his sister, a virgin (*betulah*), who is closest to him, who has not had a husband ..." In Judges 21:12: "And they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead four hundred young virgins (*betulah*) who had not had sex with a man ..." and Genesis 24:16 (speaking of Rebekah): "Now the girl was very pleasing in appearance. She was a virgin (*betulah*); no man had known her."⁴⁷ To "know" a woman is a common biblical Hebrew euphemism for "having sexual relations" (e.g., Gen 4:1, 17, 25; 1 Kgs 1:4). It is obvious that men intellectually knew Rebekah (e.g., her brother and Abraham's servant in the passage). The text is making the explicit claim that she had never had sexual relations with a man. The uses of *almah*, by way of comparison, do not provide clear clues regarding the sexual connotations associated with the term. In Genesis 24:43: "Behold, I am standing by the spring of water. Let it be that the young woman (*almah*) who comes out to draw water and to whom I shall say, 'Please give me a little water to drink from your jar' ..." Also, in Exodus 2:8 "And the daughter of Pharaoh said to her, 'Go.' And the girl (*almah*) went, and she called the mother of the boy." Likewise, in Proverbs 30:18–19: "Three of these are too wonderful for me, and four, I do not understand them: the way of the eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship in the heart of the sea, and the way of a man with a young woman (*almah*)." However, New Testament scholars, such as Brown, Lüdemann and Schaberg view

the messianic interpretation of Isa 7:14 found in Matt 1:23 is based on the connection with the name Immanuel, which expressed so well early Christian belief in the identity of the Christ, and the translation of the MT's עַלְמָה (*almah*) by παρθένος (*parthenos*) in the LXX. While the traditions of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke emphasize differently that the mother of Jesus conceived him while she was still a virgin, analysis of pre-Lukan and pre-Matthean tradition on the matter is inconclusive.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Glessner, "Virgin, Virginité in the New Testament."

⁴⁷ Glessner, "Virgin, Virginité in the Hebrew Bible."

⁴⁸ Glessner, "Virgin, Virginité in the New Testament."

Gabriel's salutation to Mary is unique in Scripture.⁴⁹ The verb used by the Lukan author *charitou* χαίρω is extremely rare in Greek and is present only two times in the New Testament: in the text of Luke on the Annunciation (Luke 1:28) *kecharitomene* κεχαριτωμένη, and in the Epistle to the Ephesians (Eph 1:6), *echaritosen* ἐχαρίτωσεν. The perfect passive participle used by Luke indicates that the transformation by grace has already taken place in Mary, well before the moment of the Annunciation. The fundamental meaning of the verb *charitoo* being *charitos* χάριτος (grace), the idea which is expressed is that of a change brought about by grace. Furthermore, the verb used by the Lukan author is in the past participial form. *Kecharitomene* κεχαριτωμένη means then, in the person to whom the verb relates, that is, Mary, that the action of the grace of God has already brought about a change.⁵⁰

Gabriel's greeting in Luke 1:28-33 to Mary also echoes the language of Zephaniah 3:14-17. Just as in the Koine Greek of the Lukan gospel mentioned earlier, the word "*Chaire*" in the Septuagint, is also translated into English as "Rejoice!" and always appears in a context where Zion is invited to the messianic joy from the perspective of the future (cf Joel 2:21-23; Zeph 3:14; Zech 9:9; and Lam. 4:21). In his announcement to Mary, Gabriel uses the formula which the prophets use to invite the eschatological Zion to rejoice in the salvation which God accords her.⁵¹ In the prophet Zephaniah 3:14-15: "Shout for joy, daughter of Zion!" the Daughter of Zion (meaning the People of Israel, and Mary is the embodiment of nation Israel) was the place where Yahweh rested, and Luke thus alludes to Mary as the new Ark of the Covenant.⁵² Luke's biblical interpretation of Mary sees her as truly representing both the people of Israel and the future Church.

⁴⁹ "It is a *hapax legomena* (or *hapax*). In ancient Greek *hapax legomena* means "uttered only once". It is a term used in linguistics to refer to words that are found only once in a text." Cf.

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_AIUTO.HTM#hapax

⁵⁰ Ignace de La Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, trans. Bertrand Buby (New York: Alba House, c1992), 17-20.

⁵¹ La Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery*, 14-16.

⁵² Just as the Ark of the Covenant contained the Ten Commandments (the Word of God, the Law) written in stone, a pot of manna (which was the bread from Heaven that sustained the life of the Hebrews during the Exodus) and the Rod of Aaron (which budded and convicted those who were grumbling against Moses), in Mary who is the **Ark of the New Covenant**, contained Jesus (the Word of God and the Bread of Life, the new Manna from Heaven), and the Holy Spirit (who is Truth that convicts us). Joseph Ratzinger writes in his work *Daughter Zion: Meditations on the Church's Marian Belief*, "She is the true Israel in whom Old and New Covenant, Israel and Church, are indivisibly one. She is the "people of God" bearing fruit through God's gracious power." Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion: Meditations on the Church's Marian Belief*, trans. John M. McDermott SJ (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 43.

In his work, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant*, Ignace de la Potterie summarises that,

In Mary are accomplished all the important aspects of the promises of the Old Testament to the Daughter of Zion, and in her real person there is an anticipation which will be realized for the new people of God, the Church. The history of revelation on the subject of the theme of the Woman Zion, realized in the person of Mary, and continued in the Church, constitutes a doctrinal bastion, an unshakable structured ensemble for the comprehension of the history of salvation, from its origin up to its eschatology.

However, it is in Mary's humble reply to Gabriel, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Lk 1:38) that she reveals how she views herself, as a lowly servant, in her relationship with God. The identification of the Ark of the [New] Covenant with Mary would have been clear to Jewish readers of Luke and John.⁵³ In the Annunciation pericope of Luke 1:26-38 Mary is characterized by many of the titles that are either alluded to or referred to depending on the context: Daughter of Zion, 'Mother-Zion', and 'Ark of the Covenant.'⁵⁴

From the time of ancient Israel up until the Middle Ages Jewish marriages consisted of two ceremonies at two separate times; each with separate celebrations. First was the

⁵³ The similarities between Exodus 40:34, 35 and Luke 1:35: are highlighted by Rene Laurentin: "The divine overshadowing, designated by the characteristic word *episkiasei*, evoked the cloud which was the sign of Yahweh's presence. This cloud was seen for the first time when the Mosaic worship was established. With its shadow it covered the Ark of the Covenant, while the glory of God—that is, God himself—filled it from within. In her turn Mary is going to be the object of this double manifestation: a presence from above that signifies transcendence, and a presence of the Lord from within. That is what is implied in the comparison of the two texts: Exodus 40:34: "The cloud covered the Tent of meeting and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle." Luke 1:35: "The power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called 'Son of God.'" René Laurentin, *Queen of Heaven: A Short Treatise on the Virgin Mary*, trans. Charles Neumann (Washington, New Jersey: AMI Press, 1991), Queen of Heaven, 27-29.

⁵⁴ The women who were favoured with miraculous births of the Old Testament, who were ancestors of the Messiah, and who contributed to the triumph and salvation of Israel are connected to Mary in the words that echoed Sarah, "Nothing is impossible with God," (Gen 18:14 and Lk. 1:37). In this way the Lukan author gives the typology of 'Mother-Zion.' The Lukan author identifies Mary with the "Daughter of Zion" according to Zephaniah 3:14-17, an identification that is found again in John 19:25-27 and in chapter twelve of the Apocalypse. Furthermore, the Daughter of Zion was the place where Yahweh rested. Thus, the Lukan author saw in Mary the new Ark of the Covenant, the eschatological resting-place of Yahweh Saviour in the pericope of the Annunciation. John Nolland writes "Mary's experience is to be compared with the dramatic way in which God's glory and the cloud marking his presence came down upon the completed tabernacle." John Nolland, *Luke*, 2 vols., Word Biblical Commentary 35a-35b (Dallas: Word Books, 1989, 1993), 1:54; Nolland, *Luke*. Therefore, just as the Ark in the Tabernacle was the special place of God's presence in the exodus from Egypt, thus, Mary has become the special dwelling place of God's glory in the new exodus. Also see see McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus*, 58., in which the author states that the Lukan author "had to have an awareness of the associations the word 'overshadow,' would evoke in the Jewish mind. No Jewish reader could fail to think of the Divine Presence or Shekinah when reading the words"; Luke T. Johnson, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 38.

betrothal *kiddush* (קידוש) or *erusin* (אירוסין) when the couple were legally married and then later after an interval was the actual wedding, *nisu'in* (ניסוין) ceremony when the bride went to live with the groom and their union was consummated. Among the reasons for the interval may have been the young age of the couple. According to the contemporary Roman laws, which were comparable to the Jewish customs, the minimum age for marriage was between the ages of twelve and thirteen for the girl and fourteen for the boy.⁵⁵

A man betrothed to a woman was considered legally married to her in Torah Law. The *Oral Law of Kiddushin* (Marriages and Engagements) states; “The husband prohibits his wife to the whole world like an object which is dedicated to the Sanctuary” (*Kiddushin* 2b, Babylonian Talmud). Therefore, through betrothal (as in Lk 1:27) or marriage, a woman became the peculiar property of her husband, forbidden to others. The climax of the wedding ceremony is when the bride and groom are led by their bridal parties to the *chupo*, a wedding chamber or tent. “By entering the *chupo*-chamber the bride passed from her father’s authority to that of her husband.”⁵⁶

The Lukan author focuses on Mary just as the Matthean author focuses on Joseph in each of the infancy narratives. In the Matthean infancy account, the author identifies Joseph and relates him to the story of the patriarch Joseph (Mt 1:19-21). However, the Lukan author initially withheld Mary’s name and identifies her simply as “a virgin” (Lk 1:27) who is betrothed to a man named Joseph, who was from the house of David (Lk 1:27). Afterwards, he gives the name of the virgin “The virgin’s name was Mary” (Lk 1:27). In this way, the Lukan author emphasizes that the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Johnson, *Dangerous Memories*, 14; also Green, “The Purpose and Theology.” Note 17 states that according to Roman law the age of marriage was 12 (for boys, 14) with the minimum age for betrothal set by Augustus at 10 (Rawson, “Roman Family.” 21) Jewish practices were similar and the marriage age for a female usually took place before she reached 12 and a half years of age.

⁵⁶ Hayyim Schauss, *The Lifetime of a Jew Throughout the Ages of Jewish History*, (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1950),

<https://archive.org/details/lifetimeofajewth013919mbp/page/n3>. electronic resource. 135.

⁵⁷ Byrne makes the literary point of distinction between Gabriel appearing to Zechariah and being “sent by God” to Mary. He also points out that this distinction that this action of Gabriel ‘being sent by God’ highlights the fact that the other purpose of Gabriel’s annunciation to Mary is to state how the conception is to be achieved, namely through the agency, not of a human being, but by the “overshadowing” of the Holy Spirit. Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel*, 33; Eugene LaVerdiere, *The Annunciation to Mary: A Story of Faith* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2004), 47.

Mary's conception of Jesus must have occurred during this interval between *kiddush* (*erusin*) and *nisu'in*. Then, according to the customs of ancient Israel, Joseph and Mary were already legally married at the time of the Annunciation having participated in the *Kiddush* and had not yet had *nisu'in*, a wedding, and come to live together. So, if this is the case, when Gabriel told Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God" (Lk 1:35)⁵⁸ Mary would have still been under the authority of her father, traditionally believed to be Saint Joachim.⁵⁹ In making this announcement, Gabriel declared to Mary that God would enter into a marital relationship with her, causing her to conceive his son in her womb. For "to lay one's power (*reshuth*) over a woman" was a euphemism for "to have a marital relationship with her." This interpretation corresponds to that in the Targum to Deuteronomy 21:4. Likewise, "to overshadow" (Lk 1:35) by spreading the "wing" or "cloak" over a woman was another euphemism for marital relations. Thus, the rabbis commented (*Midrash Genesis Rabbah* 39.7; *Midrash Ruth Rabbah* 3.9) that Ruth was chaste in her wording when she asked Boaz to have marital relations with her by saying to him "I am Ruth your handmaid, spread therefore your cloak (literally, "wing" *kanaph*) over your handmaid for you are my next-of-kin" (Ruth 3:9). *Tallith*, is another Aramaic-Hebrew word for cloak, which is derived from *tellal* meaning 'shadow'. Therefore, "to spread one's cloak (*tallith*) over a woman" means to cohabit with her (*Kiddushin* 18b). The use of the word *shekinar* (glory cloud) in this pericope is clearly "an allusion to the cloud of God's presence in the Tent of Meeting – the place where God's glory dwelt,⁶⁰ and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle" as stated in Exodus 40:35.⁶¹

Marriage is the model of the relationship God wants with God's people. The Lord says to his bride Israel: "I am married to you" (Jer 3:14) and "your Maker is your husband" (Isa 54:5; Jer 31:32). Likewise, even more intimate is what the Lord said to his bride: "You developed, you grew, you came to full womanhood ... I gave you My

⁵⁸ Byrne notes that Gabriel does more than give the messianic status of this child, but also makes clear that the conception will be through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel*, 34.

⁵⁹ Protoevangelium of James

⁶⁰ Michael Fallon, in *The Gospel According to Saint Luke: An Introductory Commentary* (Kensington NSW: Chevalier Press, 2007), 43.

⁶¹ Johnson, *Sacra Pagina - Luke*, 38. This word is also used in the Transfiguration story (Luke 9:34).

oath, I entered into a covenant with you and you became mine, says the Lord God” (Ezek 16:7, 8).

Mary’s question, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” (Lk 1:34) could be understood as testing the angel, to see if it is from God. Or as previously mentioned, it could be understood as faith seeking knowledge and she is seeking clarification because she had already taken a vow or promise of her virginity to God and was apprehensive that she would be expected to somehow break this vow. If, however, Mary had made the vow of virginity to God, how would her marriage to Joseph be a true marriage if it was not to be consummated? So perhaps Joseph was already aware of this vow beforehand and was accepting of its consequences and the marriage would only be one of companionship and convenience for both parties.

In Matthew’s infancy narrative (Mt 1:18-20) when Joseph discovers that Mary is pregnant, he knows the child was not his and he is anxious about the scandal it will cause.⁶² At the time, there was a variation in the local customs regarding the interval between the betrothal and the wedding. The bride and groom were strictly kept apart in Galilee and this may have been the source of Joseph’s concern for the possible scandal of Mary’s pregnancy. Also, the maiden bride was permitted a year’s time to prepare her trousseau for the wedding.⁶³ However, Joseph, at the angel’s direction, took Mary to live with him after he had discovered her pregnancy (Mt 1:20). The presumption that Mary’s child was the offspring of her betrothed Joseph, would have been very strong and thus there would have been no scandal that the child Mary bore was that of another man. In accordance with social customs of ancient Israel, the child she bore, Jesus, would be considered legitimate. Subsequently, at the time of Mary’s virginal conception of Jesus, Mary was legally married to Joseph and Jesus, therefore, would legally have a (human foster) father whom society would come to assume to be the biological father of Jesus (Mt 13:55). Furthermore, it is through the marital bond that Jesus is the Son of David because in ancient Israel legal paternity was through the father’s line. In the Gospel of Matthew 1:19 it is revealed that Joseph, the husband of Mary, was a righteous man, a devout law-abiding Jew. The Matthean author in this verse alludes to the serious sociological implication of illegitimate children because

⁶² He therefore “being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly” (Mt 1:19).

⁶³ Schauss, *The Lifetime of a Jew Throughout the Ages of Jewish History*. 154.

Mary's situation puts her in "public disgrace" (Mt 1:19b). When Joseph learned of Mary's pregnancy and knowing that he, her betrothed, had nothing to do with it, he had decided to put her away privately rather than publicly condemning her and Mary would have been put to death for adultery (Deut 22:22-29). Having made this decision, an angel appeared to him in a dream, saying: "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Mt. 1:20-21). In the Koine Greek translation, the angel does not use the phrase for marital union: "go in unto" (as in Gen 30:3, 4, 16) or "come together" (Mt 1:18) but merely a word (*paralambano gunaika παραλαβεῖν*⁶⁴) meaning "take her," into the house but not in the conjugal sense as a wife. For when the angel revealed to him that Mary was truly the spouse of the Holy Spirit, Joseph could take Mary, his betrothed, into his house as a wife, but he would never have conjugal relations with her because according to the Law she already had a spouse, the Holy Spirit, and was thus forbidden to him for all time.⁶⁵ Therefore, it would seem that Joseph understood that the union between he and Mary would be a celibate marriage and a chaste relationship.⁶⁶ So, was the angel Gabriel's message a command, an invitation or a proposal? Nevertheless, Mary's reply, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me

⁶⁴ *paralambanō*, par-al-am-ban'-o; from #3844 and #2983; to receive near, i.e. associate with oneself (in any familiar or intimate act or relation); by anal. to assume an office; fig. to learn:—receive, take (unto, with). James Strong, *The New Strong's Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and the Hebrew Bible*, (Online: Logos Research Systems, Inc. Also available at Logos Bible Software, 2009). *electronic resource*.

⁶⁵ Living a celibate life within marriage was not unknown in Jewish tradition. Elijah and Elisha were celibate all their lives and Moses, who was married, remained continent the rest of his life after the command to abstain from sexual intercourse (Ex 19:15). Given in preparation, the seventy elders abstained thereafter from their wives after their call, and so did Eldad and Medad when the spirit of prophecy came upon them; indeed, it was said that the prophets became celibate after the Word of the Lord communicated with them (*Midrash Exodus Rabbah* 19; 46.3; *Sifre to Numbers* 99 sect. 11; *Sifre Zutta* 81-82, 203-204; *Aboth Rabbi Nathan* 9, 39; *Tanchuman* 111, 46; *Tanchumah Zaw* 13; 3 *Petiroi Moshe* 72; *Shabbath* 87a; *Pesachim* 87b, Babylonian Talmud).

⁶⁶ Jerome offers another understanding of the union of Mary and Joseph in his letter, *The Perpetual Virginity of Blessed Mary (Against Helvidius)*, item number 21: "We believe that God was born of the Virgin, because we read it. That Mary was married after she brought forth, we do not believe, because we do not read it. Nor do we say this to condemn marriage, for virginity itself is the fruit of marriage; but because when we are dealing with saints we must not judge rashly. If we adopt possibility as the standard of judgment, we might maintain that Joseph had several wives because Abraham had, and so had Jacob, and that the Lord's brethren were the issue of those wives, an invention which some hold with a rashness which springs from audacity not from piety." Jerome, "The Perpetual Virginity of Blessed Mary - against Helvidius," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church - Jerome Letters and Selected Works*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, VI (New York, Edinburgh, Grand Rapids: T&T Clark; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007).

according to your word” (Lk 1:38) sealed her acceptance of her part in God’s plan for the salvation of humankind.

Historical Criticism of Luke 1:26-38: World Behind the Text

Historical Period

It is estimated by many scholars that the Lukan author penned this gospel sometime during the Flavian Dynasty (69-96 CE). However, StuhlmueLLer proposes between 70-85 CE⁶⁷ and places its composition in Palestine or Rome or even perhaps southern Greece, thus placing it between the major historical events of the expulsion of Jews from Palestine (70 CE) and the Roman army crossing the Rhine River to attack the Germans in 83 CE. The unstable state of affairs among the governing powers and the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE and the total devastation it caused would have contributed to the Lukan author’s eschatological vision portrayed in this gospel’s writing.⁶⁸ The influence of Greek philosophical and religious thought can be seen in the Lukan gospel’s binary vision of humanity (light and darkness, see Lk 6:20-26; 9:51-18:14), its cosmological speculation about truth and light, as well as its appeal to the character of the Word. There is also evidence of the influence of Palestinian Judaism.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, it is the long shadow of the Caesar Augustus’ enduring propaganda campaign of the “Emperor cult,” that is most evident in the pericope of the Annunciation (Lk 1:26-38).⁷⁰ It is what John Dominic Crossan has called a “Roman Imperial Theology,” and it can be seen in how the story of the Annunciation unfolds.⁷¹ Against this backdrop of a world created by the Roman rule, the Lukan author tries to show the new understanding of God’s purposes and its embodiment in the Christian movement. The Priene Inscription (OGIS 2. #458), which was found in Asia Minor, now modern-day Turkey, from 9 BCE describes Augustus Caesar as

⁶⁷ StuhlmueLLer, "According to Luke," 44:18.

⁶⁸ Lk 21:20-24 When the destruction of Jerusalem is foretold.

⁶⁹ The first-century Jewish historian, *Josephus*, listed and identified three of the major Jewish groups and their "philosophies" or ways of life: *Pharisees*, *Sadducees*, and *Essenes*. He also describes the other political and revolutionary groups of Jews, especially during the first War against Rome, active in the first century CE. The Lukan author identifies the Pharisees in 18:10-12 and 5:33; the Sadducees in 20:27 as well as priests and high priests 1:5-23; and the Zealots in 6:15. Interestingly, one of Jesus apostles was "Simon the Zealot".

⁷⁰ This propaganda was cultivated to ensure that the Empire was justified in its dominance throughout Rome and the conquered territories. Cf. John Dominic Crossan, "Roman Imperial Theology," in *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance*, ed. Richard A Horsley (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 2008).

⁷¹ Crossan, "Roman Imperial Theology."

“saviour,” and “son of god.”⁷² It also states that the birthday of Caesar Augustus, who is regarded as a god, has been for the whole world the beginning of good news (*euangelion* εὐαγγέλιον).⁷³ Furthermore, figures in the ancient world, such as Asclepius⁷⁴ have origins that could be regarded as the same as Jesus. It is difficult to imagine that Luke would be unaware of the similarities. Asclepius was supposed to have the gift of healing and on occasion, bringing people back to life. However, no claims were ever made that Asclepius himself rose from the dead as was the case made for Jesus.

In the Lukan gospel, the Annunciation account is modelled on two Old Testament patterns: Firstly, a birth prophecy is used in the Old Testament to announce the conception, birth and naming of a child. This child is to play a significant role in salvation history (Judg 13:3; Gen 16:11 Gen 18:10; 1 Kgs 13:2; 2 Kgs 4:16; Isa 7:14, 9:6). Secondly, a call narrative describes the calling of leaders to a special mission (Exod 3:10; Judg 6:14; 1 Sam 3:11-14; Isa 6:8-13; Jer 1:4-5; Ezek 2:3-8a, 3:4-11, 16-21, 25-27; 1 Kgs 22:20-21). The mission of this divine child is to bring redemption for all Israel and humankind. At the time of composition, a particular focus for the Lukan author is hope. Hope that after the great upheavals of war and civil strife, in the new age of Augustus, there will be, at last, a period of peace as a new world order seems about to dawn. In the figures of the virgin and the divine child, one could say that they represent “the archetypal images of human hope, which emerge at times of crisis and expectation,” despite the fact that there are no tangible figures in view.⁷⁵ The Lukan author uses many literary devices for Jewish readers to link the promises God made to Israel in the Old Testament to Jesus and Mary whilst drawing on the literary precedents of the prevailing Greco-Roman culture to target the Gentile

⁷² For the Priene Inscription (OGIS 2. #458) details see Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2003), 24-25. The discussion of Augustus Caesar as “saviour,” and “son of god” see Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter Willem van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible Ddd*, ed. Penelope Van Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter Willem van der Horst, Second edition extensively revised ed. (Brill, Boston; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, Leiden: Brill, 1999), 735.

⁷³ James R. Harrison and Larry L. Welborn, *The First Urban Churches 1: Methodological Foundations*, ed. Ronald F. Hock (Atlanta, Georgia: SBL Press, 2015), electronic resource, 99.

⁷⁴ Asclepius, who is a Roman god of healing, had a divine father Apollo and a human mother Coronis (or Arsinoe). This god also had the power of healing and even raising people from the dead. Jan N. Bremmer and Andrew Erskine, *The Gods of Ancient Greece: Identities and Transformations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 229.

⁷⁵ Benedict XVI and Whitmore, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 3, 55.

audience.⁷⁶ Therefore, in the characterisations of Mary and her child, God's promised messiah, Jesus, the Lukan author wants to make clear to the Roman authorities that Christians are not a threat to this hope for the future.⁷⁷

For the Christians, the Lukan author wants to clarify all that they have heard and to place it into some order and thus provide encouragement for their faith; and for the Jews he wants to proclaim the good news of God fulfilling his promises. The author also reveals that the promises made by God are so much more than the Jewish people could have ever hoped for because it was to be more than their liberation from political, social and religious oppression but the liberation from the slavery of sin.

Characterisation of Gabriel

Spirit-like beings were not unfamiliar to the ancient pagan Greco-Roman world. Aristotle argued that the motion of the heavens was the responsibility of immaterial beings and Plotinus stated that there were "guardian spirits."⁷⁸ In the pericope, it is usually presumed that Mary is alone when the angel Gabriel visits her. An unexpected (celestial) intruder would have frightened even the strongest-hearted in any culture. *Angelos* (ἄγγελος) means messenger in Koine Greek and his name would have been

⁷⁶ The literary device used by the Lukan author to engage the attention of the Jewish reader is called an "Announcement Story" which used when some important announcement such as the annunciation of the birth of a child, is made to a believer and is found mainly in the Old Testament. The typical elements are: appearance of an angel (or the Lord himself) (Lk 1:26); the person is addressed by name (Lk 1:28) and a qualifying phrase describing person (Lk 1:27); fear response of person (Lk 1:29); the person urged not to be afraid (Lk 1:30); the divine message: a woman is to have a child (Lk 1:31); the name by which child is to be called phrase interpreting the name (Lk 1:32); future accomplishments of the child (Lk 1:32-33); the objection of the person (Lk 1:34); and a sign to reassure the person (Lk 1:36-37). These following elements are not always found in this order, nor do individual stories always have all the elements. These stories are sometimes called "Commissioning Stories" and have the characteristics of confrontation where a divine representative or person on issues an authoritative commission to someone in the story. The commission which makes the recipient an agent or a higher authority; and reassurance is designed to remove any remaining resistance from the person being commissioned. Reassurance is designed to eliminate any remaining resistance from the person being commissioned.

⁷⁷ Between 4 BCE and 66-70 CE revolts regularly occurred among scribal groups, peasants and Jerusalemites and the people of Israel were continually subjected to the repressive measures of King Herod and Roman tribute, resulting in many self-proclaimed messiahs who seized leadership of the insurgent groups only to be executed by crucifixion. A mass agrarian "strike" was organised when the Galilean peasantry refused to plant crops thus producing no tribute. Richard A. Horsley, "Jesus and Empire," in *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Louisville, Kentucky; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 82.

⁷⁸ Philip Merlan, "Aristotle's Unmoved Movers," *Traditio* 4 (1946). Also Plotinus *Enneads* 3, 4.

Accessed [http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0204-](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0204-0270,_Plotinus,_The_Six_Enneads,_EN.pdf)

[0270,_Plotinus,_The_Six_Enneads,_EN.pdf](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/0204-0270,_Plotinus,_The_Six_Enneads,_EN.pdf) and Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli SJ, "Four Problems of Cosmology," in *Handbook of Catholic Apologetics: Reasoned Answers to Questions of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 123.

readily recognized by Jewish readers.⁷⁹ The fact that he tells Mary that her child will be the Son of God Most High supersedes all the other gods of the ancient Mediterranean world and emphasizes the importance of not only the messenger but also that of the message.⁸⁰ Gabriel's announcement of the title "Son of the Most High" sets Mary's unborn child in opposition to Caesar Augustus. Given the volatility of the socio-political climate among the oppressed Jewish and Gentile readers by the Roman occupation, it is a surprisingly bold declaration to make.⁸¹ However, it was a type of story that the Roman-Greco world was acquainted with, for many of the Greek gods had children to many mortal mistresses.⁸² It was the presence of an angel that was foreign to these ancient Mediterranean cultures though very familiar to the Jewish tradition. In the information communicated in the announcement by Gabriel, the Lukan author captures the attention of both Gentile and Jewish readers whilst providing an apologetic for the Christian convert.⁸³ Gabriel's prophecies about Jesus (Lk 1: 32-33) summarize the Abrahamic (Gen 12:1-3, 49:10) and Davidic (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7; 89:26.27) covenant promises.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ For the literal and metaphoric meanings see Kosior, "The Angel in the Hebrew Bible."

⁸⁰ Cline has noted that "Thomas Kraabel has proposed a method to distinguish between Jewish and pagan usage of the title Theos Hypsistos on inscribed dedications, suggesting that only those dedications with the repeated definite article, as in ὁ θεός ὁ ὑψιστος (The God the Highest One) should be considered Jewish." Rangar Cline, *Ancient Angels: Conceptualizing Angeloi in the Roman Empire*, 1 ed., vol. 172 (Boston, Leiden: Brill, 2011), electronic resource. This is the phrase used in the Koine Greek translation of this particular pericope, which distinguishes the different understandings of what an "angel" is in the Judeo-Christian use of the word. In the pagan context *angelos* (ἄγγελος) "could describe a semi-divine being or a lesser god in the service of a supreme god, a manifestation of a supreme god, the soul after death, or even a guardian spirit. As such, these beings were conceived of as being different in nature than a supreme deity, or the deity they served." Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 172.

⁸¹ In 70 CE the Jews were defeated by the Romans after a siege and the Temple was burned to the ground. Josephus, wrote of Jerusalem "that it owed its ruin to civil strife, and that it was the Jewish tyrants who drew down upon the holy temple the unwilling hands of the Romans and the conflagration." Bryan, Christopher. "Israel and Empire: From the Maccabees to the War against Rome." In Christopher Bryan, electronic resource "Israel and Empire: From the Macabees to the War against Rome," *Render to Caesar: Jesus, the Early Church, and the Roman Superpower* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). 35.

⁸² Alcmena, Antiope, Danaë, Kassiopeia were all mortal women who were impregnated by the Greek god Zeus. See Jenny R. March, *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, Second ed. (Oxford; Philadelphia Oxbow Books, 2014), online resource.

⁸³ For further information on the idea or concept of the "angel of the Lord" see Kosior, "The Angel in the Hebrew Bible."

⁸⁴ Johnson describes the Lukan author's purpose as "not being determined by a momentary crisis or by doctrinal deviance, but by the very existence of a messianic sect in the Gentile world." Johnson, *Sacra Pagina - Luke*, 10.

Characterisation of Mary

If the primary purpose of the Lukan author's gospel is legitimation and apologetic, it is not immediately evident in the reading of this pericope to either a Jewish or Gentile reader.⁸⁵ However, the Jewish reader would recall the prophecies and signs of the Old Testament by the language of the text (especially Gen 3:15, Isa 7:10-14 and Mic 5:1-4). In the chosen pericope, the Lukan author juxtaposes the Annunciation of Gabriel to Mary to the annunciation of John the Baptist to Zechariah in the preceding scene in three distinct ways. Firstly, the Lukan author tells us that Gabriel's announcement to Zechariah took place in the epicentre of Israel's religion, in the large city of Jerusalem, in the Temple. In contrast, Gabriel's announcement to Mary occurs in the obscure little town of Nazareth and there is no mention by the Lukan author of any other details, particularly the setting, in which the Annunciation takes place. Next, the first announcement Gabriel makes is to an honourable priest, who represents the multitude of Jewish people who are engaged in the midst of the Temple liturgy. In stark contrast, Gabriel's subsequent announcement was given to an unknown woman, presumably in the midst of her ordinary daily life. Lastly, because the multitude of people perceived that their priest had had a vision (Lk 1:10), the Annunciation to Zechariah had an immediate public impact. Yet even though Mary had just received the most important angelic announcement in salvation history it seems to have escaped the notice of everyone around her, with the exception of Elizabeth.

In contrasting Mary's lowliness as a handmaid to Zechariah's high social status as a priest, the Lukan author highlights that everything in Mary derives from a sovereign grace. All that is granted to her is not due to any claim of merit, but only to God's free

⁸⁵ The Lukan author was someone erudite in Hellenistic literary and scientific culture. The Lukan author was also someone who was steeped in Hebrew Scripture, the Septuagint, and who was aware of Hellenistic literary patterns, historiographical and novelistic. The author declares in the opening lines of the gospel that "...after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you ..." (Lk 1:3). Having clarified the purpose of the writings, all readers Jews, Gentiles and converts to the new Christian beliefs could now proceed with confidence. One of the overriding themes addressed by the author of the third gospel (and Acts) is to demonstrate to that the people of the new emerging Christian religion could be good citizens of the Roman Empire. Thus, reassuring the civil authorities that the old apocalyptic imagery of a coming Messiah from heavenly coming kingdom of God, might not be considered an obvious denunciation of its king, Caesar, nor the Roman Empire itself, because the emperor and governors and the state as a whole are ordained by God and as such should be respected. The fact that the founder of this new movement, Jesus, was executed as a political criminal, and that the Christians were being associated with the destruction of Jerusalem, many of the people would have thought of them as incendiaries or as revolutionaries - in short, a threat. Simultaneously, the Lukan author communicates that the promises made by God to the Hebrews are being fulfilled. By regular reference or inference to these, the Lukan author draws the attention of the Jewish reader to these wonderful realities.

and gratuitous choice. In this way, Mary stands in the biblical tradition of God choosing the people least expected to play a crucial role in His plan of salvation.⁸⁶

The Lukan gospel was most likely written during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian (r. 81-96 CE).⁸⁷ The Lukan author writes in a well-educated style of Greek,⁸⁸ suggesting the gospel was intended for more a genteel audience who seem to be a much more cultured literary kind in contrast to either Mark or Matthew.⁸⁹ It has different thematic concerns. Because the author is writing predominantly for Gentiles in the Greek cities of Asia Minor or Greece, the work has a different political self-consciousness. They are concerned about the way they will be perceived and the way that the church will be perceived by the Roman authorities.⁹⁰

Among the ruling classes of ancient Roman society pudicitia was publicly rewarded and celebrated in difference to its notoriously licentious cultural norms.⁹¹ Against this backdrop of double standards, the Lukan author mentions Mary's virginity twice.⁹² The concept of virginity varied according to culturally accepted norms. The Jews regarded virginity as highly prized because there was not only honour at stake but also a financial exchange that involved harsh monetary penalties on the men of the family should there be any question of the virginity of the woman; and the woman

⁸⁶ Further examples include how God chose a man named Moses who was slow of speech and unsure of his ability to lead to bring the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt; and the youngest boy of all of Jesse's children, David, to become Israel's next king. It was not a woman from the Jewish aristocracy, or the daughter of a chief priest in Jerusalem, or the wife of a famous lawyer, scribe, or Pharisee, but an unknown virgin named Mary from the little village of Nazareth to become the mother of Israel's long-awaited Messiah-King.

⁸⁷ Karl L. Armstrong, "A New Plea for an Early Date for Acts," *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity & Judaism* 13 (2017): 19.

⁸⁸ Henry Cadbury, "Literary Standard of Luke's Vocabulary," in *The Style and Literary Method of Luke*, ed. George F. Moore and James H. Ropes (London: Oxford University Press, 1920; reprint, Kraus Reprint Co), 4-38.

⁸⁹ "A sense of delicacy keeps Luke from including scenes of violence and disrespect ..." Stuhlmueeller, "According to Luke," 44:17.

⁹⁰ Clyde Weber Votaw, "The Gospels and Contemporary Biographies," *The American Journal of Theology* 19, no. 1 (1915).

⁹¹ Pudicitia, a Roman goddess, was the personification of modesty and chastity who was worshiped in Rome and is represented in works of art as a matron in modest attire. This state of being was to be aspired to by both patrician men and women and was to be portrayed in every aspect of one's person and life. Rebecca Langlands, "Sexual Virtue on Display I: The Cults of Pudicitia and Honours for Women," in *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). The fact that Mary's virginity is confirmed twice in the pericope and that she was visited by an angel, who announced that she was to become the mother of the Son of the Most High would have been considered the pinnacle of achievement in Roman society for anyone. This pericope embodies the hopes and aspirations for the Gentile reader and reveals God's promise of a Messiah to the Jewish people realized.

⁹² The Lukan author mentions Mary's virginity twice (Lk 1:27, 34) as repetition in Scripture is a literary device to emphasize the importance of a fact or idea. Firstly, the author draws attention to her physical condition; and secondly, Mary herself confirms this condition.

herself could be stoned to death (Lev 20:1–27).⁹³ The physical integrity of the female was paramount. Not so in the Roman culture where *pudicitia*, was considered a state of being (and one need not necessarily be virginal or female to have it). Langlands explains in her book *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome* that *pudicitia* was more than virginity, modesty and chastity.⁹⁴ It was knowing what to do and how and when to do it; and it was also about one's approach to life and its challenges, which were expected to be handled with great dignity, graciously and courageously. *Pudicitia* was much more highly prized than the virginity of a woman, for the public attention it attracted for the one who was perceived to display *pudicitia*, her husband and family and the extended social circle was very well acclaimed. So highly regarded was *pudicitia* that for a time, sacrifice and offerings to many of the gods stipulated that the one making the sacrifice or offerings must be publicly recognized as being in a state of *pudicitia*.⁹⁵ The Gentile readers would easily assume that Mary's state of being was that of *pudicitia* by her gracious behaviour recorded in the Lukan account of the Annunciation. Mary's physical reaction could be interpreted as controlled and composed because she did not fall to the ground or run away. The Jewish reader could have focused on the words of Gabriel and the unmistakable reference to Isaiah's prophecy (Isa 7:14). She is, however, surprised by the greeting and the *message* of her celestial visitor. The pericope does not clearly identify Mary's reaction to Gabriel's presence but suggests a possible self-composure by the question she asks (Lk 1:34).

The reference to the *pudicitia* which is implied in Mary's countenance would appeal to the Gentile reader, and the reference to Mary's visit from the angel Gabriel would resonate with the Jewish reader. The overall general construction of the pericope would reassure the Christian convert because it can be viewed as a way of arming these

⁹³ Simo Parpola and Robert M. Whiting, *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2-6, 2001* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, c2002).

⁹⁴ Langlands, "Sexual Virtue on Display I."

⁹⁵ Langlands, "Sexual Virtue on Display I."; John J. Pilch, *A Cultural Handbook to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 107-08. Pilch points out that when lexicographers translate the Hebrew word *betulah* (בְּתוּלָה) "virgin," it refers to "a stage in life, or an age mainly the age of puberty or just after puberty begins." However, it came to mean "virgin in the sense of physical integrity" in the Hebrew Bible because of its particular use in certain passages: for example, Numbers 31:17-18, 31:35, Genesis 24:16; Leviticus 21:3 and Judges 21:12. Pilch highlights the fact that the Lukan author uses the root word *parthenos* to have other meanings which are best understood as marriage or entry into marriage. (Lk 2:36; Acts 21:9); in Koine Greek, *parthenos* (παρθένος) means: "a maiden; by implication an unmarried daughter: virgin. (Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words of the Hebrew Bible and the Greek Testament*. #3933; Strong, *The New Strong's Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and the Hebrew Bible*.

Christians with the answers and the arguments that would allow them to be a part of society; and to respond to the kinds of claims and charges made against Christians by their pagan contemporaries. What this type of apologetic literature shows is how the early Christians encountered at a very vibrant intellectual level the arguments and the social life of their pagan Roman world. The angel's declaration of Mary being "full of grace" (Lk 1:30) indicates to either a Gentile or Jewish or convert reader that she is favoured by God's benevolence. In this way the Lukan author identifies that Mary is not only someone the reader can relate to but someone who is worthy of their notice, despite her presumably lowly social status. The notable absence of any other details regarding Mary, leave room for the reader to imagine and interpret for themselves in this characterisation of Mary. It also allows the reader to focus on the information that *is* there.

The careful structure of the pericope builds on the tension created by the Lukan author relying on many presumptions of and by the early reader.⁹⁶ The Lukan author's inclusion of key details, such as the reference to the Davidic king (Lk 1:32) and the ascribed honour bestowed on Mary through her betrothal to Joseph's family lineage connection with David as well as the cultural standards would resonate with those readers familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures. The Lukan author would have been cognizant that the Jewish reader would have also known that in the first-century world of Palestine, the culture commended that men (fathers, husbands, brothers) to guard, and protect the women in their care (Sir 26:10-12) lest the family honour be compromised.⁹⁷ The Jewish reader would have also recalled that it was the man who chose the wife in ancient marriages, so that when Gabriel announced that "the Spirit will come upon you" meaning to protect and "overshadow," her, the Lukan author

⁹⁶ The Lukan author considers the Hellenistic tradition and the employment of many forms of literature in order to convey a specific meaning in this pericope. See Paul L. Maier, "Luke as a Hellenistic Historian," in *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture* (Brill, 2012), 424. The Lukan author's skilful use of biblical allusions to an earlier story in Judges 13:2-7 would remind the Hebrew reader a precedence and would adumbrate the Annunciation of Jesus. In the use of a literary prophecy Luke 1:32-33 the Lukan author wants to portray a positive attitude toward Gentiles and the Roman Empire. Thus, convince Gentiles of Christianity's harmlessness or to convince fellow Christians to take a less vociferously eschatological attitude toward the Roman Empire. With the joy of this announcement, the author wants to demonstrate the continuation of the biblical story not to defend the Christian movement as such but to defend God's ways in history.

⁹⁷ In Cooper's writing he stated, "Were virginity not expected and valued, it would hardly be a crime to cast doubt on a girl's maidenhood." Jerrold D. Cooper, "Virginity in Ancient Mesopotamia" (paper presented at the Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2-6, 2001, 2002), 93.

knew that these were two duties of a Middle Eastern husband that the original readers of this pericope would recognize God's role as that of a traditional husband.⁹⁸ Therefore, in her question to Gabriel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" could be interpreted as a response that Mary was fearful of being placed in an embarrassing and potentially shameful situation if no tokens of virginity could be produced (see Deut 22:13-21) on the marriage night.⁹⁹ The Jewish reader would have been able to predict the scandalous crisis which this pregnancy would create for both families (see Deut 22:13-31, Num 5:11-31). Mary's father and brothers would be shamed for not taking proper care of her (see Sir 42:9-10) which would add further shame to the family.¹⁰⁰ For "in the Middle East, honour is not everything. It is *the only thing!*"¹⁰¹ However, Israel was accustomed to learning of individuals who were called by God to forsake all human bonds and social customs in preference to his holy will (for example the call of Abram (Gen11:31-12:9); the command to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:9) and the mother's sacrifice of her seven sons (4 Macc: 15-29) and the Gentile converts to either Judaism or the new movement of Christianity would have learned this from the Septuagint as part of their religious instruction.¹⁰² The Lukan gospel confirms later on in the narrative that Mary acquired even greater honour because she bore Jesus (Lk 2:6) and was obedient to God's will.

⁹⁸ John L. McKenzie, "Aspects of Old Testament Thought," in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1968), 749.

⁹⁹ Betrothal would happen most likely at the occurrence of the girl's menarche. John J. Pilch, *A Cultural Handbook to the Bible*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), <https://books.google.com.au/books?id=FHzFvbOkYoUC>. online resource. 112.

¹⁰⁰ No mention is made of the possible impact Mary's conception of a child could have on Joseph. For if he was to claim the child as his own, he would be either a thief or a cuckold of the community and be subjected to ridicule and humiliation.

¹⁰¹ Pilch, *A Cultural Handbook to the Bible*. 133.

¹⁰² Johnson states how the Lukan author "sets out to write the continuation of the biblical story, showing how the Gentile Church of his own day emerged in continuity from a faithful and restored Israel, organizing his narrative as a whole into the pattern of the Prophet and the people." Johnson, "The Prophecy of Jesus' Birth (1:26-38)," 3, 30.

Chapter IV: Exegesis of Luke 1:26-38 in Four Artworks.

In historical criticism, the world in front of the text is an important dimension in the exegetical process. The world of the text refers to the role of the reader in the interpretive process. In this research, the world in front of the text refers to the worlds of the artists of the four artworks being examined. This research seeks to understand how the artists understand the theology in the Lukan account of the annunciation for their time, how their thinking is reflected in their artworks, and how their interpretation is influenced by their historical circumstances. The following sections describe the historical contexts of the early European Renaissance period of Flanders and Spain in the 15/16th century and 20th century contemporary Australia.

Historical Context: 15th/16th Century Flanders and Spain

The ignorance of Hebrew and Greek in Western Europe in the Middle Ages helped to establish Jerome's tradition of the Western Church, and thereby nearly all interpretations and commentaries are based on the Latin text. The Church was the authority on the medieval exegesis that was incorporated into its teachings.¹⁰³ According to Schwarz, "... every student of theology studied Peter Lombard's (1100-1160) *Sententiae* and any rejection of the scholasticism would have the greatest repercussions upon the course of theological studies."¹⁰⁴ Therefore, theoretically speaking, "an interpretation not objected to by the Church was considered to be valid and binding on every member of the Christian community."¹⁰⁵ The basis of Bible exegesis was the scholastic method and the Schoolmen¹⁰⁶ had to resist any change of the text in the Latin for on this very wording their philosophical thought was based.¹⁰⁷ Regarding the scholastic method Schwarz states:

¹⁰³ Schwarz, "Traditional View," 45.

¹⁰⁴ Schwarz, "Traditional View," 53.

¹⁰⁵ Schwarz, "Traditional View," 45.

¹⁰⁶ "Schoolmen" refers to a collection of scholars and writers from the eleventh to the fifteenth century who attempted to accommodate the tenets of Aristotle to those of the church fathers. They were usually teachers of theology or philosophy who felt that the inclusion of the classical thoughts in tandem with those of the early Christians were of import in a fair teaching of the curriculum. Robert T. Lambdin, "Schoolmen," in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature*, ed. Robert T. Lambdin (Greenwood 2000).

¹⁰⁷ Schwarz, "Traditional View," 53.

Its strength lay in its old tradition and a method worked out with greatest logical subtlety. Its weakness was that the very strength of the tradition tended to inhibit the new thought necessary to the maintenance of its impetus.¹⁰⁸

By the 1500s the method of Bible exegesis had evolved. "Its basic principle was the fourfold sense of the text: the literal, ... the allegorical, ... the moral and the anagogical."¹⁰⁹ Despite the many schools of scholasticism, all of them considered their ideas to be in conformity with Holy Scripture, as each school had taken their guidance from the divinely inspired holy Fathers of the Church.¹¹⁰

Flanders

Conciliarism, a reform movement in the Catholic Church that lasted from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century was condemned at the Fifth Lateran Council, 1512–17. The movement emerged in response to the Western Schism between rival popes in Rome and Avignon. It was one of many movements that came to an end at the start of the Protestant Reformation, as did spiritual movements, such as the *Devotio Moderna* which flourished in the Low Countries and Germany. However, it was the influence of three individuals, namely Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) an Italian Dominican friar, John Duns Scotus (c. 1266 –1308) an English Franciscan friar who was a realist philosopher and scholastic theologian, and William of Ockham (c. 1285–1349) also an English Franciscan friar and scholastic philosopher and theologian, that continued through to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Flanders in the teachings of the nominalist, Gabriel Biel (1418-1495). Biel called "the last of the Scholastics", lived in the transition period for Christian theology and philosophy.¹¹¹ He was appointed in 1484 the first professor of theology at the University of Tübingen.¹¹² Biel espoused the characteristics of both Scholasticism and Conciliarism, acknowledging the primacy and supreme power of the pope but maintaining the superiority of general councils, insofar as that they could compel the pope to resign.¹¹³ Biel's thinking was to eventually influence Martin Luther.¹¹⁴ Biel claimed that the Annunciation was "the

¹⁰⁸ Schwarz, "Traditional View," 52.

¹⁰⁹ Schwarz, "Traditional View," 47.

¹¹⁰ Schwarz, "Traditional View," 52.

¹¹¹ Lawrence F. Murphy, "Gabriel Biel as Transmitter of Aquinas to Luther," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 7, no. 1 (1983): 1.

¹¹² William M. Landeen, "Gabriel Biel and the Brethren of the Common Life in Germany," *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 20, no. 1 (1951).

¹¹³ John Augustine Ryan, "Gabriel Biel," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Kevin Knight (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907).

¹¹⁴ See Murphy, "Gabriel Biel as Transmitter of Aquinas to Luther." 26-41.

moment at which the Word becomes flesh in the womb of Mary; at this moment she becomes the Mother of God.”¹¹⁵

At the time of creation of this manuscript, Biel (1425-1495), was also very well-known and active in the region.¹¹⁶ Biel (1420 to 1425-1495), belonged to the Augustinian religious community of the Canons Regular of the Congregation of Windesheim, which was an offshoot of the Brethren of the Common Life.¹¹⁷ He died some five years before the creation of the Flemish Renaissance work, the *Rothschild Prayer Book, Folio 84v: The Annunciation*. In his sermons and teachings, he taught that Mary was predestined by God to be the mother of Jesus. Biel divided the sanctification of Mary into two parts: firstly, her immaculate conception in the womb of her mother Saint Ann and secondly, her miraculous virginal conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. In response to the Jewish argument that the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 does not refer to a virgin but a young woman, Biel argued that it related specifically to Mary's virginity and her conception of Jesus had to be virginal otherwise the Incarnation would not be a token of God's omnipotence. Biel viewed Mary as, “the Hope of the World” and “the preservation of her virginity “as a form of restoration which provides humankind with a certain hope in its own future bodily freedom from corruption.”¹¹⁸ Biel identified Mary, who through her humility, was an individual who prepared herself for a great task; that of “*co-operatrix*.”¹¹⁹ In one of his Marian sermons, Biel explained that Mary's rule in heaven, given to her by her Son Jesus, was not through her own power but through the influence she has with her Divine Son.¹²⁰ Biel regarded Mary not only as “the completion of the work of redemption and restoration” but also that “she administers the sacrifice of Christ and applies the fruits of his work.”¹²¹ He defended Mary's co-operation with the Incarnation through her maternity and humble

¹¹⁵ Oberman, "Mariology," 308.

¹¹⁶ Gabriel Biel was considered a nominalist. Cf. Ryan, "Gabriel Biel."

¹¹⁷ A semimonastic order of laymen and clergy dedicated to the cultivation of inner spirituality and good works started by Gerard Groote (1340–84). Thomas Bergin, G. and Jennifer Speake, "Common Life, Brothers and Sister of The," in *Encyclopedia of the Renaissance and the Reformation*, ed. Jennifer Speake (New York: Facts On File, Incorporated, 2004), 113.

¹¹⁸ Oberman, "Mariology," 309.

¹¹⁹ Oberman, "Mariology," 302.

¹²⁰ Oberman, "Mariology," 311.

¹²¹ Oberman, "Mariology," 309-10.

disposition as well as her co-operation with the sacrifice of Jesus through her offer of compassion.¹²²

Spain

When Falcó was working in Valencia there were many religious works in circulation including *Vita Christi*, by Francesc Eiximenis, OFM, and, also by the same title but different author, Ludolphus Saxony, both of these were translated into Catalan, and *Corpus Christianorum*, *Patrologia Latina*, and *La Vida de la Sacratíssima Verge Maria de Miquel Peres*. All were greatly dependant on *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, a sermon of Bernard of Clairvaux and the so-called Pseudo-Bonaventura, *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, a book which was widely circulated in Catalan.¹²³ Also, at the time there were theology classes given by Dominican masters in Catalan at the town's cathedral.¹²⁴ The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception began to be debated in the Middle Ages and was very prominent in Valencia at the time the altarpiece by Falcó was created.¹²⁵ Those who supported the doctrine were known as immaculists, and those who opposed it, the maculist.¹²⁶ For medieval theologians, it was of prime importance because it centred on their understanding of how original sin was transmitted.¹²⁷ The immaculists tradition in the Christian kingdoms of Spain, especially Aragon and Castile, more than elsewhere in western Europe, is evident in the literature and of the late Middle Ages.¹²⁸ Poetry competitions were held in honour of Marian devotion, around the feasts of the Annunciation – 25 March – to celebrate Mary's conception and bearing of Christ and the December Annunciation celebrated on 18 December.¹²⁹ The other feast was the celebration of Mary's own conception – 8 December. The Immaculate Conception featured regularly in these competitions. The overarching theme in the Marian theology of the time was Mary's purity.

¹²² Oberman, "Mariology," 310.

¹²³ Hauf Valls.

¹²⁴ Hauf Valls. Email.

¹²⁵ "the belief that Mary was, though conceived in the normal human way, preserved from the taint of original sin" Lesley K. Twomey, *The Serpent and the Rose: The Immaculate Conception and Hispanic Poetry in the Late Medieval Period* (Leiden; Boston: Brill; Biggleswade, 2008), ix; Twomey, *The Serpent and the Rose*.

¹²⁶ Twomey, *The Serpent and the Rose*, 1.

¹²⁷ Twomey, *The Serpent and the Rose*, 47.

¹²⁸ Twomey, *The Serpent and the Rose*, ix.

¹²⁹ Twomey, *The Serpent and the Rose*, 6. Also this feast was allegedly instituted by St Ideophones (d. 667), Archbishop of Toledo. Twomey, *The Serpent and the Rose*, 14.

Isabel de Villena (1430-1490) composed *Vita Christi*¹³⁰ for the nuns of the *Santa Trinitat* convent, of which she was abbess, in response to the misogynistic work *Llibre de les dones*, written by Jaume Roig (d.1478),¹³¹ “which was the principal, longest work of this kind in the whole of Europe.”¹³² Roig was an eminent doctor in Valencia and Villena’s contemporary. He was also a benefactor of the convent.¹³³ Roig wrote the book *Espill o Llibre de les dones (Espill)* [Mirror or Book of Ladies] in which he aims to praise Mary but also vilifies women, for they cannot live up to the standards set by the perfect Virgin.¹³⁴ In it, he makes “charges against women such as inconstancy, lust, inability to love deeply, associating with the devil, and stupidity.”¹³⁵ In her response, Villena was attempting to change the negative image of women that was emphasised in Roig’s writings. By restricting her account of Jesus’ public life to just those episodes in which female characters figure as the beneficiaries of his words or miracles and by her construction of highly intelligent female characters, she demonstrates by her own intellectual prowess the blatant falseness of Roig’s last accusation of stupidity.

Vita Christi was “made public at the request of a queen [Isabella of Castile]” and the printed edition was available in 1497 with the intention “that the purpose of the *Vita* was considered to be didactic, and also two-fold.”¹³⁶ It has been written so that a simple people can come to knowledge ... but more importantly it has been written to promote meditation in the reader.”¹³⁷ Because it was written in Catalan, and not Latin as most theological works were at the time, it is assumed that its appeal would have been to a much wider readership. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the artist, Nicolás

¹³⁰ The medieval genre of writings called *Vita Christi* (Life of Christ) was very popular. Among the collection of books owned by the *Santa Trinitat* convent were *Vita Christi* by Ludolph of Saxony (1374) and Catalan writer Francesc Eiximenis, *Vida de Jesucrist* (1399). Although de Villena had access to these works, their style of writing and audience were different. Twomey, *The Fabric of Marian Devotion*. 16-18.

¹³¹ “Michael Solomon (1997) interprets Roig’s book as a medical treatise, Rosanna Cantavella (1992) highlights its misogynist approach, and Robert Archer focuses on its humour (2005).” Twomey, *The Serpent and the Rose*, 6.

¹³² Cantavella, “Intellectual, Contemplative, Administrator,” 102.

¹³³ Lesley K. Twomey, “Sor Isabel De Villena, Her *Vita Christi* and an Example of Gendered Immaculist Writing in the Fifteenth Century,” *La corónica: A Journal of Medieval Hispanic Languages, Literatures, and Cultures* 32, no. 1 (2003): 90.; also cf. Cantavella, “Intellectual, Contemplative, Administrator,” 102.

¹³⁴ Twomey, *The Serpent and the Rose*, 6.

¹³⁵ Cantavella, “Intellectual, Contemplative, Administrator,” 102.

¹³⁶ Twomey, “Sor Isabel De Villena,” 90.

¹³⁷ Twomey, “Sor Isabel De Villena,” 95.

Falcó would have been familiar with this book and the theology it contained, especially given its close proximity to the artist's work precinct.

Historical Context: 20th Century Contemporary Australia

In post-Vatican II Australia of the 1980s, Roman Catholic Christians had displaced Anglicans as the most numerous religious category on the census. However, it was the influx of immigrants from Asia and the Middle East who brought with them from their countries and cultures religions that were historically in the minority in this country. These immigrants were to have the biggest impact on multi-cultural Australian society and culture.¹³⁸ Also, the advances in communication technology gave the population an even wider exposure to secular and other ideologies. In his address at "A Grain of Eternity: 1997 Australian International Religion, Literature and the Arts Conference" poet and academic, Noel Rowe, discussed how the theologies of evangelisation and inculturation which had developed after Vatican II and which represented the possibility of dialogue between gospel and culture, were readily taken up due to the many new opportunities for this to occur (such as theology departments that were created at universities including Flinders University, Murdoch University and Charles Sturt University and the opening of the University of Notre Dame in 1989).¹³⁹ Australia, like many other Western countries, was reassessing its identity and addressing out-dated laws regarding the inclusion of its native peoples and equality for women as well as the integration of the massive influx of immigrants. It was a time when many religious orders, seeking to renew and even reinvent themselves, were seriously exploring their connections between the Church and the world, between their own evangelical origins and their contemporary circumstances. Many believed that because of its dogmatico-theological tradition, that (Catholic) Christianity had lost its influence and relevance because it had severed its connections with experience and story. In contrast, others found within dogmatico-theological tradition the seeds of renewal.¹⁴⁰ It was in this mixed environment of scepticism and empiricism that

¹³⁸ This was largely due to immigrants from Europe. "4102.0 - Australian Social Trends, 1994 - Special Feature: Trends in Religious Affiliation," Australian Bureau of Statistics, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/2f762f95845417aeca25706c00834efa/10072ec3ffc4f7b4ca2570ec00787c40!OpenDocument>. Furthermore from 1980-1990 Australia's refugee immigrants where mainly from Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos), the former Yugoslavia, East Timor, Lebanon, and El Salvador and India.

¹³⁹ Rowe, "Landing the Sacred," 181.

¹⁴⁰ Rowe, "Landing the Sacred," 181.

Biblical historical criticism and feminist criticism began to look at the New Testament in search of empirical proof of Jesus. In 1985, Robert Funk founded *The Jesus Seminar* to renew the quest of the historical Jesus and to report the results of its research to the general public. Thirty scholars were at the initial meeting in Berkeley, California and their findings were later published in a book in 1995 called *The Five Gospels*.¹⁴¹

Due to the advancements in modern technology, the world in 1990 was now flooded with visual images and the world of art was now free from any constraints. Public opinion and market demand were now the driving force in the world of art. Christian theology had divided into many groups such as feminist theology and liberation theology. In 1988 Pope John Paul II issued *Mulieris Dignitatem*; a letter advocating the dignity of women and Christian complementarianism to promote the view of the complementary roles of men and women in line with the philosophy of “new feminism.” In 1987, when Jane Schaberg’s controversial book “*The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives*” was published it became a focus of interest in the world of academia because it challenged the long established traditional theological understanding of Mary’s conception of Jesus.¹⁴² In her book, Schaberg proposes that Jesus had been conceived illegitimately, probably as a result of a rape of Mary, and that Matthew and Luke were aware of this and had left some hints of that knowledge in their Gospels, despite that their main purpose was to explore the theological significance of Jesus’ birth. As a former student of Raymond Brown (who wrote “*The Problem of the Virginal Conception of Jesus*”¹⁴³), Schaberg was well positioned to challenge the traditional pedagogy on Mary from the emerging feminist academic viewpoint having been exposed first-hand to the teachings of one of the most prolific theologians and writers of the era in this male-dominated area of theological study. However, Schaberg was not the only one challenging the status quo in the world of theology and the Incarnation in particular. In his work, *A Cultural Study of Mary and the Annunciation: From Luke to the Enlightenment* Gary Waller regularly refers to a group of fifty-four scholars known as the Jesus Seminar (as noted

¹⁴¹ Eventually more than 200 professionally trained specialists collaborated to research projects to examine questions about religion that matter. "Westar Institute,"

<https://www.westarinstitute.org/about/>. These findings were also featured in an article by David Van Biema in April 8, 1996 edition of Time Magazine.

¹⁴² Jane Schaberg, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

¹⁴³ Cf. Raymond E. Brown, "The Problem of the Virginal Conception of Jesus," *Theological Studies* 33, no. 1 (1972).

above) who discussed at length the major tropes of typology used in the Bible.¹⁴⁴ Many of their findings supported the idea that the Annunciation in the Lukan gospel (Luke 1:26-38) was a theologoumenon.¹⁴⁵ In his book *Sign and Promise* the Australian theologian, John Thornhill discusses the relationship between Mary, the Mother of the Saviour and the Church and the place of Mary in the life of the Catholic communion.¹⁴⁶ Thornhill acknowledges modern scholarship's recognition of the theme of "rejoice daughter of Zion" (Zech 2:14; cf. 9:9; Zeph 3:5; Joel 2:21) and "the place of Mary in the Christ-event by comparing her with Eve."¹⁴⁷ However, as the Church faces the challenges of the coming age, he sees in Mary a simple and gracious model for the Church to emulate to bring about a personal union with God.

Exegesis of the Artworks

In this section, an exegesis of the world of the four artworks will be undertaken. The choice of artworks was dependent on being able to view them at close quarters. Permission to view these works for some length was granted by the curators of both collections: the Kerry Stokes Collection, Collections Administrator, Erica Persak and New Norcia Museum Collections Manager, *Marina Baker*. The selected artworks include two from the Early European Renaissance; one is from the late fifteenth/early sixteenth century Flanders and the other from Valencia in Spain, and two contemporary artworks from late twentieth century (1990) Australia.

An art analysis will be done after each has been examined for its Historical Context, Material Culture, Iconography (under the headings of Period of the Artwork,

¹⁴⁴ Waller, *A Cultural Study of Mary and the Annunciation: From Luke to the Enlightenment*. 42. "The Jesus Seminar was organised in 1985 in Berkeley California, to renew the quest of the historical Jesus and to report the results of its research to the general public. It was founded by Robert W. Funk. Thirty scholars and more than two hundred professionally trained specialists joined the group at various phases. "Westar Institute".

¹⁴⁵ Theologoumenon is a way of speaking of God or divine things without using the name of God. "Theologoumenon," in *A Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. W. R. F. Browning (Oxford Biblical Studies Online).also "*Theologoumenon* (Gr. 'theological dimension/ element') means a nonbinding theological thesis that is found clearly neither in Scripture nor in the definitive teaching of the magisterium. Theses of great theologians can have the status of theologoumena and may later in some way enter the teaching of the church. Some non-Catholic scholars sometimes use the word theologoumenon to distinguish the binding definitions of the first seven ecumenical councils from some subsequent pronouncement of the Roman Catholic Church." Gerald O'Collins SJ and Edward G. Farrugia, *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, Third ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2013), electronic resource, 263.

¹⁴⁶ John Thornhill, "Mary and the Church," in *Sign and Promise: A Theology of the Church for a Changing World* (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1988).

¹⁴⁷ Thornhill, "Mary and the Church," 222.

Characterisation of Gabriel, Characterisation of Mary) and followed by an Art Analysis.

The two artworks from the Early European Renaissance were created in cultures which were deeply immersed in Catholicism - from the Low Country cities of Bruges and Ghent is the *Rothschild Prayer Book*, and Valencia, Spain *The Madonna Annunciate; The Angel Gabriel* by Nicolás Falcó. These cities were thriving centres of trade¹⁴⁸ and commerce, heavily engaged with the Mediterranean world where a cross pollination of theological ideas and artistic styles are displayed in the selected artworks.¹⁴⁹ In each artwork, Mary is depicted reading from a book, which is leaning on a *prie-dieu*. Up until the late eleventh century, in artworks of the Annunciation, depictions of Mary either weaving or spinning yarn was a common motif.¹⁵⁰ Neither activity exists in the stark Lukan account of the Annunciation narrative. The influence of the Italian humanists who advocated the education of women can be seen in Mary's ability to read.¹⁵¹ Conversely, according to Schiller, Mary was regarded by medieval theologians as "mistress of all seven Liberal Arts which lead to a knowledge of God."¹⁵² Schiller also states that "mystics, however saw in contemplation and prayer the preparation for the task which God had willed."¹⁵³ Mary reading a book is only one of the popular motifs found within an artwork on the Annunciation at this time. Others will be discussed later in this Chapter.

¹⁴⁸ David I. Luis, "Valencia: Opportunites of a Secondary Node," ed. Wim Blockmans, Mikhail Krom, and Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz, *The Routledge Handbook of Maritime Trade around Europe 1300-1600: Commercial Networks and Urban Autonomy* (London; New York: Routledge, 2017).

¹⁴⁹ Luis, "Valencia: Opportunites," 58. Also Debra Blumenthal, "Slave Labors," in *Enemies and Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 81.; also cf. Jan Dumolyn, "'I Thought of It at Work, in Ostend': Urban Artisan Labour and Guild Ideology in the Later Medieval Low Countries," *International Review of Social History* 62, no. 3 (2017).

¹⁵⁰ Laura Saetveit Miles, "The Origins and Development of the Virgin Mary's Book at the Annunciation," *Speculum* 89, no. 3 (2014): 634. Additionally the spinning yarn could also be a possible reference to an activity of a 'good woman' in Proverbs 31:19 or the activity Mary would have been expected to do in the Temple in the Protoevangelium of James Chapters 10, 11.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Juan Luis Vives, Charles Fantazzi, and Inc ebrary, *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth-Century Manual* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2000), online resource, xxvi and Lorraine Pearce Bucklin, *Life and Times of Isabella of Castile*, (Chicago, Illinois: Monarch Book Company, 1894), <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/eagle/congress/bucklin.html>. online resource.

¹⁵² Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, trans. Janet Seligman, 5 vols. (Lund Humphries Publishers, 1971), 42.

¹⁵³ Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, 42.

Artwork 1: "Rothschild Prayer Book. Folio 84 Verso: The Annunciation. Matins, Hours of the Virgin" Ghent And Bruges (C. 1505-1510).

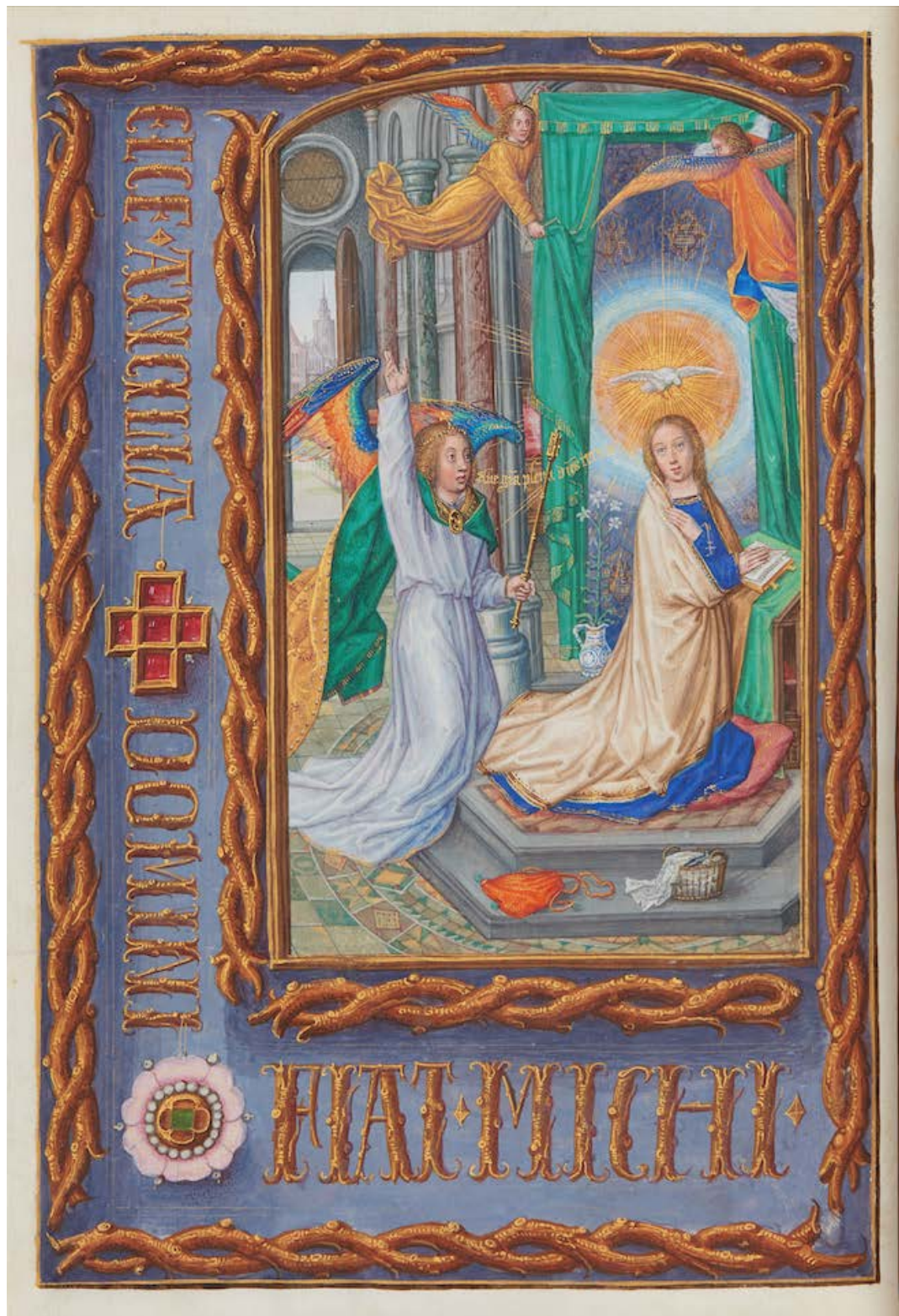


Figure 4: 1
Measurement: 228 x 160 mm. i + 252 + ii folios

Description: Parchment. Script: Gothic rotunda in black ink. Two sets of foliations.
LIB.2014.017, Kerry Stokes Collection, Perth,



Figure 4: 2

Historical Context

Of the many regions of Northern Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Flanders was the most urbanized, and it became the major centre for trade in Northern Europe. Following the wars between France and England and the Black Plague, a thriving economy emerged in Northern Europe and by the mid-fifteenth century Flemish cities, such as Bruges and Ghent, became nodes for merchants from England, the Baltic, Italy, and France as well as centres of artistic production.¹⁵⁴ Although religious, Northern Europe was not dominated by the Church, but various and ongoing political factors dominated by kingdoms and aristocrats.¹⁵⁵ This affected religious practices and private devotional activities played a role in Flemish art. Books of hours became very popular and were important visual influences on larger forms of painting. Able to rely on trade networks that brought raw materials to these cities, artistic crafts

¹⁵⁴ Andrew Murray, "Introduction to Fifteenth-Century Flanders," Smarthistory, Inc, <https://smarthistory.org/flanders/>.

¹⁵⁵ "The 15th Century in Northern Europe: Sacred and Secular Space," Radford University, <https://www.radford.edu/rbarris/art216upd2012/Northern%20europe%20in%20the15th%20century%20s11.html>.

flourished.¹⁵⁶ Bruges and Ghent consequently functioned as a crucible for both the wealthy patrons, highly specialized workshops and crafts-people to produce high-quality paintings, goldwork, textiles, and sculptures. Another major source of patronage came also from the Burgundian court.¹⁵⁷ Wisse states that “the Burgundian court naturally attracted the best artists” for commissions for members of the court for portraits, manuscript illumination of both devotional and secular books, court pageantry, especially ducal weddings, grand civic tournaments, funeral monuments and tapestries to decorate interior spaces of Burgundian palaces and the prevalent court taste for luxury goods.¹⁵⁸

The *Rothschild Prayer Book* contains neither arms, emblems nor portraits to positively identify its intended original owner. Scholars believe that the *Rothschild Prayer Book* would have been commissioned for someone extremely wealthy and well educated, and was produced in Ghent and Bruges between 1505–1510.¹⁵⁹ These two locations had been major centres of production for illuminated manuscripts for hundreds of years, however, with the advent of the printing press, the demand for illuminated manuscripts declined.¹⁶⁰

The *Rothschild Prayer Book* is 228 millimetres by 160 millimetres. The folio being examined for this research is *Folio 84v*: “*Annunciation, Hours of the Virgin. Matins, Rothschild Prayer Book*. The accepted illuminator for the image of the *Annunciation*, Gerard Horenbout, had a well-established workshop in Ghent and produced other known similar scenes of the *Annunciation*.¹⁶¹ Both Bruges and Ghent were home to

¹⁵⁶ Murray, "Fifteenth-Century Flanders".

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Jacob Wisse, "Burgundian Netherlands: Court Life and Patronage," The Metropolitan Museum of Art, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/bnpu/hd_bnpu.htm. also Susan Jones, "Manuscript Illumination in Northern Europe," The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/manu/hd_manu.htm.

¹⁵⁸ Wisse, "Burgundian Netherlands".

¹⁵⁹ Margaret M. Manion, *An Illumination; the Rothschild Prayer Book and Other Works from the Kerry Stokes Collection C. 1280-1685*, Kerry Stokes Collection (Perth, Western Australia: Australian Capital Equity, 2015), 9.

¹⁶⁰ Cyril Davenport, "Illuminated Manuscripts," *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 60, no. 3087 (1912): 249.

¹⁶¹ The workshop of Gerard Horenbout also produced a considerably inferior version called *The Annunciation*, in about 1500, using tempera colours and gold paint on parchment, 15.2 × 11.1 cm now held in The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. See <http://www.getty.edu/museum/media/images/web/download/00417901.jpg> and the *Spinola Hours. The Annunciation*. This work was created under the name of Master of James IV of Scotland and it is also in tempera colours, gold, and ink on parchment about 1510 – 1520. See <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/3893/master-of-james-iv-of-scotland-the-annunciation-flemish-about-1510-1520/?dz=0.5000,0.7441,0.50>

local aristocracy and patrician classes who were attempting to imitate the Burgundian dukes thus producing demands for luxury objects which included richly illuminated manuscripts.¹⁶²

Material Culture

The *Rothschild Prayer Book* was made more than half a century after the advent of movable type printing and “came at the end of a long development in manuscript culture.”¹⁶³ Manuscripts, such as the *Rothschild Prayer Book*, were produced in collaborative workshops by teams of crafts people who painstakingly and meticulously worked on every detail. Known as either a “Prayer Book” or a “Book of Hours,” these fine manuscripts were for personal, devotional use and were treasured for their artistry and content among the Catholic laity. Because the Divine Office is not included in the *Rothschild Prayer Book*, but it does include many other detailed prayers and devotions marking specific saints’ feast days, it is presumed that it was intended for a layperson with a detailed knowledge of the faith. Kate Challis describes books of hours as being “considered to be a required fashion accessory of the wealthy, the *haute couture* of the Middle Ages.”¹⁶⁴ Appendix A on page 103 of this thesis details the various features of the Rothschild Prayer Book.

The book is bound in red velvet, which was renewed in the mid-sixteenth-century. The illumination of the *Annunciation folio 84 verso from Matins, Hours of the Virgin*, was created with tempura colours and gold paint on vellum and takes up most of the page. The soft lighting that is recorded within this work is redolent of the naturally lit environment in which it was created. The calligraphy and the binding may have been completed in Bruges. Horenbout was renowned in his day and highly sought.¹⁶⁵ He was noted for spatially complex and intellectually sophisticated artwork and was considered a master in his field. His attention to detail is very fine, with reference to the details on the cloak of the angel Gabriel. In fact, the details had to be viewed with

¹⁶² Kate Challis, “Marginalized Jewels; the Depiction of Jewellery in the Borders of Flemish Devotional Manuscripts,” in *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship*, ed. Margaret M. Manion and Bernard J. Muir (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1998), 255.

¹⁶³ Anne Dunlop, *Antipodean Early Modern: European Art in Australian Collections, C. 1200-1600* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), online resource, 29.

¹⁶⁴ Challis, “Marginalized Jewels,” 269.

¹⁶⁵ Thomas Kren et al., *Illuminating the Renaissance: The Triumph of Flemish Manuscript Painting in Europe*, (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003). 20.

a magnifying glass and torch for this research; the writing of the words from Gabriel was so minute that it would have been painted with a single hair. Throughout the manuscript are many decorations that include details of gems and jewellery, such as the ones on Folio 84 verso and 85 recto, and the “jewelled borders seem to only occur in books designed for worship; no examples have been located so far in secular texts.”¹⁶⁶ In medieval Europe, jewels, either owned or worn as bodily ornaments, were certainly objects of desire however, they were also regarded to reflect the Divine Glory and splendour of the Heavenly Jerusalem according to the book of the Apocalypse.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, Challis states that in “the writings of Saints Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas it was explained that despite the fact that *lux* (light) was physical, it was essentially regarded as a metaphysical reality ... as gems had the ability to receive and transmit this *lux* and hence, these transparent bodies acquired a metaphysical reality.”¹⁶⁸ This concept was stressed by the medieval lapidaries and treatises and therefore these precious materials could be invoked as an aid for contemplation of the Divine because of their perceived spiritual connotations.¹⁶⁹ The majority of jewelled borders in medieval manuscripts appear in association with the representations of holy personages, such as the Virgin Mary.¹⁷⁰ Other scholars believe the jewels or gems in the margins are a mnemonic aid used to recall and memorize important liturgical texts.¹⁷¹

Iconography

Period of the Artwork

This artwork is exceptional in its expressivity and economy in conveying many and varied complex theological ideas. Almost every line from the pericope of Luke 1:26-38 can be identified in the “*Rothschild Prayer Book, Folio 84 verso: The Annunciation*” by either symbol or iconography in this artwork. The compositional format of the *Annunciation* is inspired by the tradition of past masters such as Robert Campin (c. 1427-32), Domenico Veneziano (c. 1445), and Fra Angelico (c. 1450).¹⁷²

¹⁶⁶ Challis, “Marginalized Jewels,” 267.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Revelation 21:18-21

¹⁶⁸ Challis, “Marginalized Jewels,” 267.

¹⁶⁹ Challis, “Marginalized Jewels,” 267.

¹⁷⁰ Challis, “Marginalized Jewels.”

¹⁷¹ Cf. Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Second ed. (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), electronic resource, 241-48.

¹⁷² See Timothy Verdon and Filippo Rossi, *Mary in Western Art* (New York: In Association with Hudson Mills Press, 2005), 97-106.

The angel Gabriel on the viewer's left is in three-quarter profile and Mary on the right, her body slightly twisted but her face is to the viewer, however, the short distance between Gabriel and Mary bring them into a more intense relationship. Their positioning expresses that they have moved beyond a mere greeting to a conversation about a matter of great importance. Mary's expression suggests an immediate and ready consent. The faces of these figures share the exact same features, implying that each is like the other: heavenly. The pillars of the baldachin are not without significance. Pillars are used in the art to connect the earth with the heavens, and in this case humanity to the divine.¹⁷³ In many ways, this artwork mimics other famous works of the era with which the artist would have been well acquainted, especially the Ghent Altarpiece (see following page) made in 1432 for Ghent's Cathedral of Saint Bavo by Jan van Eyck, a work regarded as one of the most influential of the era.¹⁷⁴

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¹⁷³ James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), electronic resource, 227.

¹⁷⁴ Other such works include *The Mérode Altarpiece*, attributed to the Master of Flémalle or workshop, c. 1425-1428. Also see Figure 4: 3 - Ghent Altarpiece; Susan Jones, "The Ghent Altarpiece," The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ghnt/hd_ghnt.htm.



Figure 4: 3 - Ghent Altarpiece
 Artists: Jan van Eyck, Hubert van Eyck
 Dimensions: 3.5 m x 4.6 m
 Created: 1430-1432
 Period: Northern Renaissance
 Media: Wood, Oil paint, Tempera

Characterisation of Gabriel

Gabriel, who declares that he “stands before the presence of God” (Lk 1:19) must therefore, be pleasing to God. Since the archangel Gabriel holds a sceptre he is seen in this image as one with royal authority, a messenger of God (Luke 1:26a) as he points skyward in the manner of ancient orators as he makes his announcement. Gabriel is in the act of genuflecting in Mary’s presence. His golden cloak (in this context gold is understood as the colour of divine intelligence, marriage, of faith and of fruitfulness) is lined with green, the symbolic colour of hope, regeneration and fertility, and the small diadem on his head indicates his elevated station among the angels.¹⁷⁵ His white

¹⁷⁵ Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols*, 29, 30.; also cf. Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 151, 53.

tunic refers to him being likened to light. Among the many fine details on Gabriel's cloak are pearls trimming the edge; the gem that denotes salvation. The angel's greeting "*Ave gratia plena*" is in Latin in gold lettering (Lk 1:28) however, it is very difficult to read because it is so small, and a magnifying glass is required to read the text. In the marginalia directly on the left of Gabriel is a ruby and gold cross (possibly a brooch-like) motif which reminds the viewer of the presence of Jesus and draws the viewer's attention to Gabriel and the significance of this heavenly messenger in this scene.¹⁷⁶ Gabriel's rainbow coloured wings are a mnemonic prompt for the viewer to recall the description of the glory of God made by the prophet Ezekiel as he recalled his first vision from God (Ezek 1:28).

Characterisation of Mary

In the original text, there is nothing to indicate what activity Mary was engaged in at the time of the arrival of Gabriel, or her state of mind or her physical being. In spite of this lack of information, the artist has depicted Mary's face is serene and contemplative; her mouth is gently curving upward in a smile. The absence of animation on Mary's face could be interpreted as the exact moment in which Mary ponders the angel's greeting (Lk 1:29). Anna Jameson has described such angelic likeness as "the *portrait* face looks through the *angel* face."¹⁷⁷ The sky-blue tunic Mary is wearing symbolizes heaven and heavenly love.¹⁷⁸ The colours symbolic of divine wisdom are either blue or golden yellow and they are portrayed together, with gold details, in the tunic that Mary is wearing.¹⁷⁹ Mary's left hand draws the light gold coloured cape modestly across the front of her body (Figure 4:4).

¹⁷⁶ Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 43. Also Challis, "Marginalized Jewels." 267.

¹⁷⁷ Anna B. Jameson, *Sacred and Legendary Art by Mrs Jameson*, 1st AMS ed., 2 vols., vol. 1 (New York AMS Press, 1970), electronic resource, 73.

¹⁷⁸ Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 151.

¹⁷⁹ Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 199.

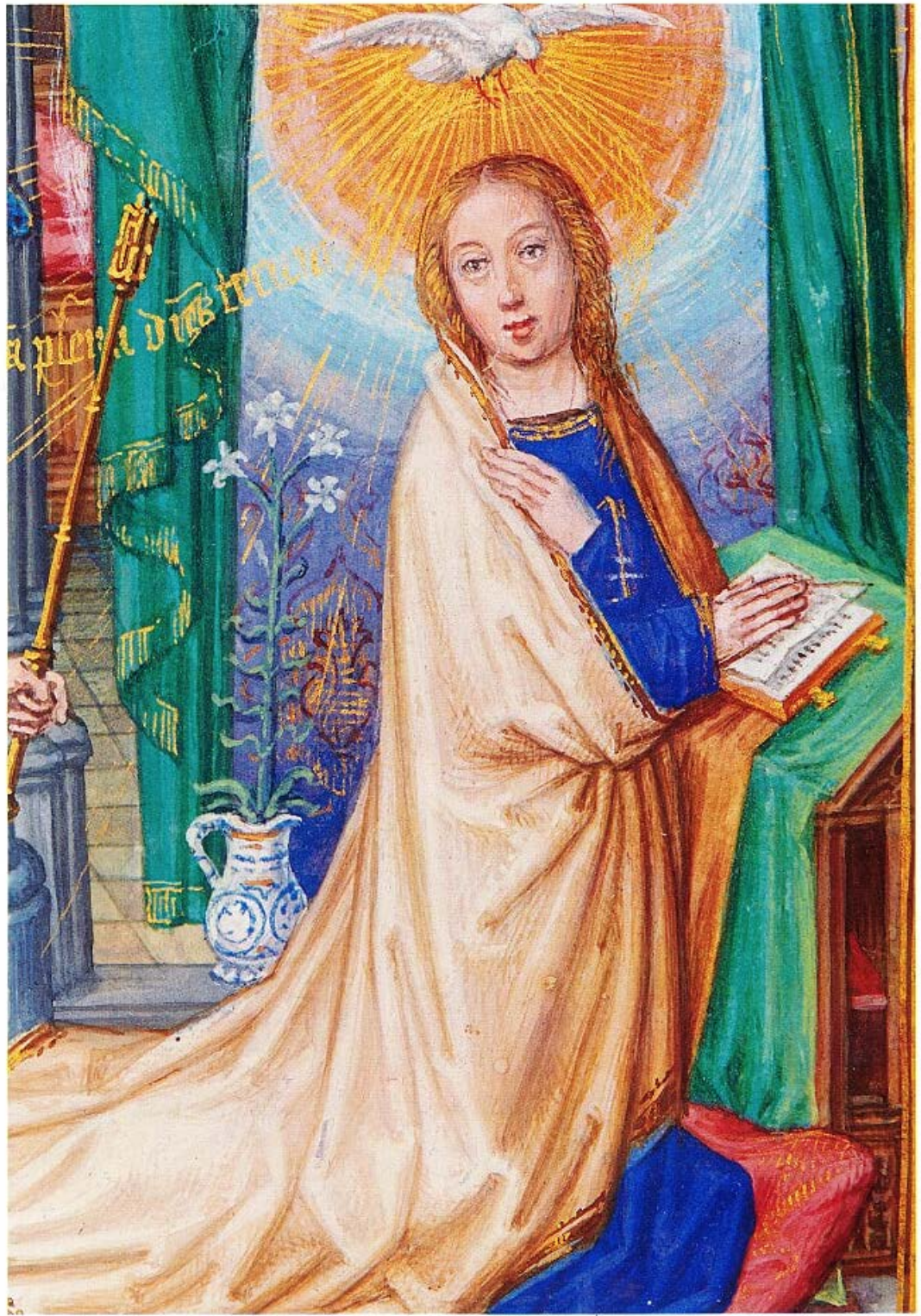


Figure 4: 4 - "Rothschild Prayer Book, folio 84v: The Annunciation – detail.

The blue and white ceramic vase with the white lily behind the figure of Mary and the closed bag (in red which is the colour of Divine Love) are all motifs pertaining to Mary's virginity (Lk 1:27) and the basket of sewing in the bottom right-hand corner of the image references Mary's activity of weaving or spinning in Chapter 10 of the

Protoevangelium of James.¹⁸⁰ Mary kneels on a cushion, which is “the conventional symbol of lust,” and this implies Mary’s “victory of purity over lust.”¹⁸¹ The cushion is red, the colour of passion and hate, of power and action and of sin and suffering.¹⁸² Mary kneeling on the red cushion alludes to her ascendancy over these. The book, if it is a book of Scriptures and not a prayer book, also alludes to God the Father. Behind her head is a pale orange disc and at its centre is a dove from which radiate striations of gold.¹⁸³ Surrounding this disc is an aureole of blue, brushed with white cloud-like wisps. In this illustrated moment of the Annunciation, the overshadowing of Mary by the Holy Spirit is taking place during the dialogue between Gabriel and Mary, and God the Son is becoming flesh in Mary’s womb.

There is an open door in the top left background which suggests the angel’s entry point (Lk 1:26) into the scene of an enclosed, intimate and private space or sanctuary (Lk 1:27). Schiller traces the presence of an external town-like structure with a church spire within an artwork from Byzantine art to Western art to refer to Nazareth.¹⁸⁴ Above the open door is a round window with what appears to be a dull gold coloured glass.¹⁸⁵ A window in Christian art symbolically “suggests penetration without violation and destruction.”¹⁸⁶ The glass in the window further emphasizes this concept (Figure 4: 5).

¹⁸⁰ In Chapter 10, of the Protoevangelium of James, the priests decided to make a veil for the temple of the Lord. The weaving of the purple and scarlet fell by lot to Mary. "Protoevangelium of James."

¹⁸¹ Verdon and Rossi, *Mary in Western Art*, 104.

¹⁸² Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols*, 29.; also cf. Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 152.

¹⁸³ When Jesus was baptised, the Holy Spirit was described as being like a dove (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32) and thus is the most likely source of artistic inspiration.

¹⁸⁴ According to Schiller, “the juxtaposition of Mary and the church building ... may simply be an allusion to the church in Nazareth, which was so much visited by pilgrims.” Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography in Christian Art: Christ's Incarnation, Childhood, Baptism, Temptation, Transfiguration, Works, and Miracles*, trans. Janet Seligman, 1st American ed., 2 vols., vol. 1 (Greenwich, Conn: New York Graphic Society, 1971), 37,38.

¹⁸⁵ The geometric shape of circle, ring, disc or sphere shape is “universally accepted as the symbol of eternity and never-ending existence” Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 153.; also see Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols*, 202.

¹⁸⁶ Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols*, 136.

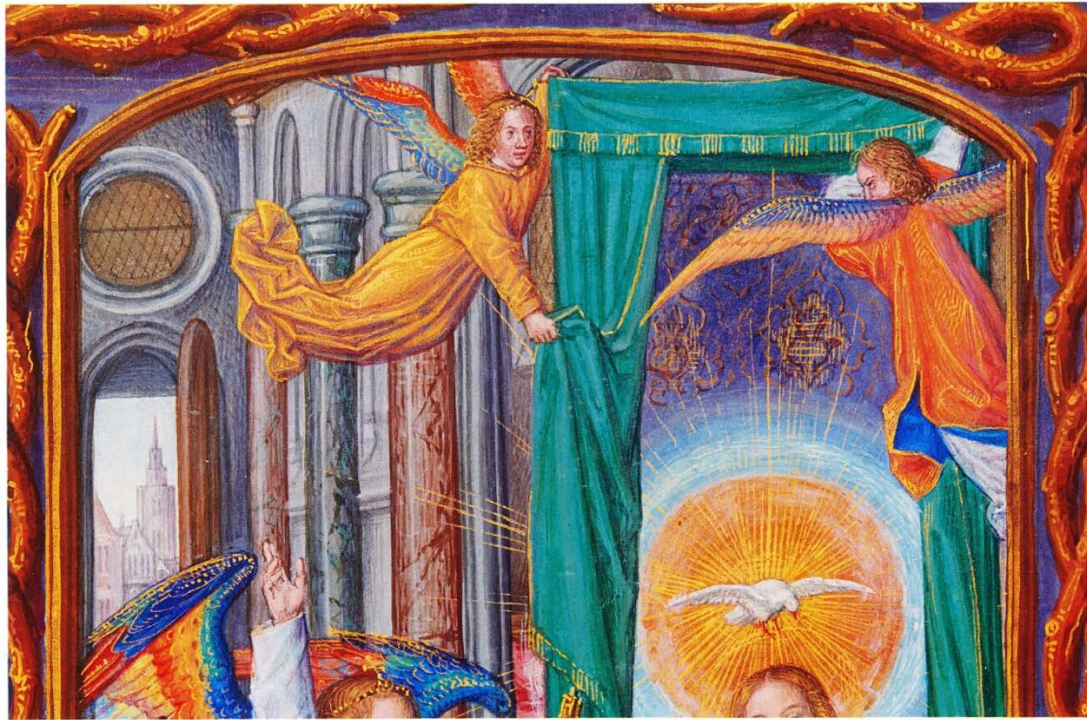


Figure 4: 5 - "Rothschild Prayer Book, folio 84v: The Annunciation. Matins, Hours of the Virgin" - background details.

At first glance, the event seems to be taking place inside a medieval structure, possibly the sanctuary in a church, but the presence of the angels and the tall green drapery remind the viewer of the baldachin or tabernacle within the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Jerusalem.¹⁸⁷ The absence of candles on the hexagonal two-step dais contradicts a reference to the church altar setting, but directly references the Holy of Holies which would have had the menorah (a seven branched candelabrum) outside away from the veil of the Temple (Ex 27:20). The green drapery which forms a baldachin over Mary, and the two cherubim (also with rainbow coloured wings) identify her as the living tabernacle and the new Holy of Holies (in the Temple) (Lk 1:31b and Lk 1:32a).¹⁸⁸ The three pillars in the background of the scene are motifs for the Trinity as are the rings of three colours encircling Mary's head. According to Didron, the idea of the three circles were "an extension of, and the complement of the

¹⁸⁷ Baldachins are "an ornamental canopy over an altar, usually supported on pillars, or a similar form over a tomb or throne." "Baldachin, Baldacchino, Baldachino, Baldaquin, Ciborium," in *Dictionary of Architecture and Construction*, ed. Cyril Harris (New York: McGraw-Hill 2005).79. They are a part of medieval architecture and are used in processions to cover the sacred image or object being carried.

¹⁸⁸ "Green is the colour of vegetation and of spring, and therefore symbolizes the triumph of spring over winter, or life over death." Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 151. In Exodus 25:18-22, God gave to Moses the description of the details of the Ark of the Covenant. Two cherubim were to be made out of gold and were to be positioned to face each other above the mercy seat. It was here that God would meet with Moses and deliver God's commands for the Israelites.

triangle” indicating the Trinity.¹⁸⁹ However, it is the dove that refers to the presence of the Holy Spirit, by whose agency the virginal conception takes place (Lk 1:35).

Art Analysis

In the *Rothschild Prayer Book*, *Annunciation* can be seen the pericope of the Lukan gospel (Lk 1:26-38). The composition is complex making the eye move quickly all over the page and it relies heavily on the inclusion of traditional established symbolic colouration, artefacts and bodily postures to communicate the many messages and references within it. The colours are vivid, making it a very exciting and joy-filled image. The details are very finely executed. The organic lines of the bodies and the garments of both main figures are graceful and suggest a smooth and gentle movement. Likewise, the two angels with rainbow-coloured wings gently hover in the top part of the scene, as they hold back the curtains of the baldachin in a gesture that signifies the “revealing of the divine.”¹⁹⁰ The pale blue sky on the left side of the image draws the eye to a vanishing point which is an outside town or cityscape in which the spire of a church can be seen.¹⁹¹ As the outdoor scene is parallel to the nimbus surrounding the head of Mary, the eye is drawn immediately to the white dove overshadowing her as she kneels at a *prie-dieu* with her hand on a book.¹⁹² Underneath the book is the inside of Mary’s pale golden cloak, which in turn is on top of a cloth of green – the colour of hope.¹⁹³ The many vertical lines in the pillars, drapery, and interior structure of the space draw the viewer’s attention repeatedly to the presence of the angels hovering above the scene. An even closer inspection reveals the presence of a bed behind the pillars, which has a pale red coloured covering on it. The walls behind it are dark blue

¹⁸⁹ Adolphe Napoleon Didron, *Christian Iconography: The History of Christian Art in the Middle Ages*, vol. 2 (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1965), 63.

¹⁹⁰ The rainbow colours (on the wings of Gabriel and the two cherubim angels) in this work prompt the viewer to also recollect the rainbow’s presence in the book of Genesis. In this book, God makes two promises both demonstrating God’s mercy toward sinful humankind, one of which is covenantal. The first is in the Garden of Eden when God promises the redemption of humankind through the seed of the “woman” (Gen 3:15) which is the Incarnation. In the second promise made by God, the rainbow is the sign of the covenantal promise given to Noah that never again would God destroy the earth by water (Gen 9:11-17). In this case, the rainbow is the symbolic reminder of that covenantal promise and its effect of the reconciliation between God and the human race. For the “revealing of the divine” see Maya Corry, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven, *Madonnas and Miracles: The Holy Home in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Maya Corry, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2017), 92

¹⁹¹ According to Schiller, the inclusion of a church may be “.... an illusion to the church in Nazareth, which was so much visited by pilgrims.” Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, 37.

¹⁹² Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, 42.

¹⁹³ The splendor of Mary’s garments shows the honour accorded her and that the communion is desired by God, who calls to Godself the mother from all eternity from whom was God’s son was born.

with an intricate pattern. This is Mary's inner most domicile, the fabric through which the Holy Spirit has broken. Once realizing that this is no ordinary domestic scene of the Annunciation, the viewer distinguishes the vase with the lilies, closed bag, sewing basket and cushion on which Mary kneels, no longer as props for the scene but can read them as symbols relating to Mary's virginity¹⁹⁴ (Figure 4:6).



Figure 4: 6 - "Rothschild Prayer Book, folio 84v: The Annunciation. Matins, Hours of the Virgin" - foreground details.

Thus, the artwork implies that in this moment when Mary answers Gabriel with, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Lk 1:38) that the Incarnation of Jesus occurs.¹⁹⁵

The artists' rendering of this pericope draws the viewer into the story of the Annunciation to Mary and has many symbols to remind the viewer of the significance of this event. Portrayed a Northern European setting, it provides familiarity and

¹⁹⁴ In this artwork contains references to the Old Testament promise of a virgin who would conceive a child (Isa 7:14). In *The Birth of the Messiah*, Brown lays out why he is not convinced by Rene Laurentin's arguments that Mary should be regarded as the Ark of the New Covenant. Cf. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: Matthew and Luke*, 327-28; also Laurentin, *Queen of Heaven: A Short Treatise on the Virgin Mary*, 27-30. Each of these discuss the various translations of *episkiazein* (ἐπισκιάζειν) "overshadow" and the implications it has for the claim that Mary is or is not the Ark of the New Covenant.

¹⁹⁵ Biel claimed that "this was the moment at which the Word becomes flesh in the womb of Mary; at this moment she becomes the Mother of God." Oberman, "Mariology," 308.

relativity for the viewer. In the marginalia, the borders are made up of a rinceaux of gilded vines which cover the left side and underneath the artwork framing the Annunciation scene.¹⁹⁶ The Latin words *ECCE ANCILLA DOMINI FIAT MICHI* run anti-clockwise and translate to “Let me serve the Lord.” It is punctuated by two jewel-like motifs, painted to look like a brooch made up of pink enamel, pearls, ruby and gold and is positioned at the bottom highlighting the words *FIAT MICHI*.¹⁹⁷ This part of the composition is set against a lighter blue-grey background and complement the miniature scene the Annunciation, emphasising the fact that the event depicted is of great importance. The profusion of the symbols reminding the viewer of key elements of the narrative underscores this momentous occasion.

The realism with which this painting is executed invites the viewer into the scene. Even more than an accumulation of symbols is the closeness of the two figures: the visual and emotional interval that the artist has left between Gabriel and Mary is referred to in the very short space between them. It is a sacred space between Creature and Creator. Here the viewer encounters the divine intimacy. It suggests visually what the text depicts legibly that there is no lack of hesitation in Mary’s response in her eagerness to do the will of God; and therefore, is a visual prompt for the viewer to do likewise.

¹⁹⁶ *Marginalia* is the medieval Latin word for “things in the margin” and refers to writing or decoration in the margins of a manuscript. “Marginalia,” in *Oxford Living Dictionaries* (Online: Oxford University Press, 2018). *Rinceaux* (pl) is form of ornament used in the borders of manuscripts and consists of a patterning of fine foliate branches. Michelle Brown, *Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts: A Guide to Technical Terms*, (Malibu, California: J. Paul Getty Museum in association with the British Library, 1994), https://openlibrary.org/books/OL1430816M/Understanding_illuminated_manuscripts. electronic resource. 107.

¹⁹⁷ Pearls symbolize salvation, rubies symbolize the blood of Christ. Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 43. In this context gold could be understood as the symbol of power, the sun and of Heaven. Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols*, 40-41.

Artwork 2: “The Madonna Annunciate; The Angel Gabriel.”
Falcó, Nicolás. (c. 15th/16th).



Figure 4: 7

Materials: both oil on panel, gold ground.

Measurements: 28.03 in. (71.20 cm) (height) by 10.63 in. (27.00 cm) (width)

Description: pair, framed as one

Historical Context

The pair of altar panels, *The Madonna Annunciate; The Angel Gabriel* were created by Nicolás Falcó in Valencia, during the reign of the Spanish monarchs, Isabella I of Castile (r. 1474-1504) and Ferdinand II of Aragon (1479-1516). They are framed as one and are now housed in the Kerry Stokes Collection in Perth, Western Australia.

The artist, Nicolás Falcó, who had worked on other altarpieces in Valencia that were commissioned by the Church and viewed by the public, was described by O'Neil as "in the general hard style of Spanish artists at that period, who had not studied the *beau-idéal* of nature in the simplicity of the Italian school."¹⁹⁸ O'Neil also states that Falcó "had the stiff, vapid manner peculiar to those days, and partaking of the styles of the Byzantine and early Florentine schools."¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, Falcó's Hispano-Flemish style combines intricate Gothic motifs characteristic of the Northern Renaissance with elements of the Islamic-inspired Mudejar style.²⁰⁰ This combination of influences can be seen in the gold leaf detail design of *The Madonna Annunciate; The Angel Gabriel*. It has been suggested that these altar panels were most likely part of an artwork commissioned by the convent of the Franciscan Order of the Poor Clare nuns, who enjoyed royal patronage and thus the most likely to afford such an elaborate work.²⁰¹ The convent was adjacent to the palace, where the Queen had her own rooms. The queen's cousin, Elinor de Villena who later entered this convent and took the name Isabel, was the first novice to take the veil at The Holy Trinity Convent.

¹⁹⁸ Falcó painted *Our Lady of Wisdom* in the University of Valencia Chapel, and the high altars of the Monastery of Saint Clara and Isabella as well as participating in the works of the cathedral chapter. He often completed the works for the Master of Perea as well. Retrieved from "Falcó, Nicolás, the Elder," Dictionary, *Benezit Dictionary of Artists* (www.oxfordartonline.com: Oxford University Press, 2006), <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/benezit/B00061298>. Also, A. O'Neil, *A Dictionary of Spanish Painters: Comprehending That Part of Their Biography Immediately Connected with the Arts, from the Fourteenth Century to the Eighteenth - Part 1*, (London: C. O'Neil, 1833), <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044034295121;view=1up;seq=136>. online resource. 112.

¹⁹⁹ O'Neil, *A Dictionary of Spanish Painters: Comprehending That Part of Their Biography Immediately Connected with the Arts, from the Fourteenth Century to the Eighteenth - Part 1*. 30.

²⁰⁰ Relating to the Muslim subjects of Christian monarchs during the *Reconquista* of the Iberian Peninsula from the Moors (11th–15th centuries) who, until 1492, were allowed to retain Islamic laws and religion in return for loyalty to a Christian monarch. "Mudejar," in *Britannica Academic* (6 February 2018).

²⁰¹ Isabel de Villena was associated with the Valencian court of her cousin, the devout Queen Maria, from her early childhood. Cantavella, "Intellectual, Contemplative, Administrator," 98.

Material Culture

It is believed by the curators of the Kerry Stokes Collection that the altar panels by Nicolás Falcó, were probably meant for a private chapel; and this research suggests it was possibly for the Convent of the Trinity in Valencia, which has been run by the Royal Order of Holy Trinity Clarist nuns since the middle of the fourteenth century. Falcó, a native of Valencia, had already produced several other altarpieces, and had completed works for the Master of Perea as well. It is not certain whether the frame itself is more recent than the panels it encloses. The panels do not line up perfectly in their present state however, when viewed as they are currently presented they appear as a completed work. In its original intended location, this artwork would have been illuminated by candles and the size of the panels suggest a small, intimate setting. The flickering of the candle flames would have made the gold leaf in the pressed metal background flicker, creating a very personal, three-dimensional affect, contrasting the solid, coloured figures of Mary and Gabriel. It is not hard to imagine this special effect in the soft, darkened gallery where only the artworks are lit in a particular light that will not injure the works but yet illuminates them to the advantage of the gallery in which this artwork is exhibited. The viewer of this devotional artwork could not help but feel that they were witnessing this unique moment in history.

Iconography

Period of the Artwork

At first sight, there is nothing in this artwork to distract the viewer from this great moment. Falcó has rendered the artwork in much the same way as the text is recorded in the Gospel of Luke but upon closer examination, gradually more is revealed in the artwork just as it is in the pericope. The decorative background, copious folds of the garments worn by the figures of Mary and Gabriel and shallow space combine the painting traditions of the Byzantine and Italian Renaissance.

Its resulting plateresque style,²⁰² characterized by profuse surface decoration, was popularized in architecture and decorative arts—particularly metalwork, such as silver or gold -smithing,²⁰³ when this artwork was being constructed. Hammered and gold-leaf details in the wooden panel, provide the elaborate background against which the figure of Mary stands silently contemplating as she reads a prayer book. The organic pattern design and the motifs incorporated in the background were probably drawn from existing traditions in the Byzantine, Ottoman and Mediterranean cultures active in the city of Valencia. The hammered and gold-leaf design could also replicate the luxurious, rich silk velvets and brocades which were highly prized commodities that were produced and traded in Valencia at the time. The following images show examples of the patterns created in silk textiles from the fifteenth century.

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²⁰² This style has a broad range of description however it primarily refers to “an ornamental treatment of the classical orders in which the various elements, especially entablature mouldings, columns/pillars and bases, were richly decorated, licenses taken with strict Vitruvian rules and a certain preference given among Renaissance motifs to grotesques and foliage” John B. Bury, "The Stylistic Term 'Plateresque'," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 39 (1976).

²⁰³ The growth of intolerance, and the eventual expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain, forced many of those who stayed to convert to the Catholic faith. These converts became known as “*conversos*” or “new Christians” who were converted from Judaism and “*moriscos*” meaning “little Moors” for those who converted from Islam. These converts adapted and modified their skills and designs as craftsman and artisans so that they could be accepted by the guilds in order to gain commissions, many of which came from the Catholic Church. Cf. Mark D. Meyerson, *The Muslims of Valencia in the Age of Fernando and Isabel: Between Coexistence and Crusade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, c1991). 129.

Figure 4: 8 - Silk Textiles – Spain 15th Century - Victoria and Albert Museum²⁰⁴



From: Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Physical description: Textile. Red silk; woven with a repeating design consisting of lobed lozenge-shaped compartments formed by leaves and enclosing floral devices geometrically arranged in green and yellow.

Date: 15th century (made)

Artist/maker: Unknown

Materials and Techniques: woven silk

Dimensions: Length: 1 m, Width: 0.26m

Place of Origin: Spain (made)

²⁰⁴ Unknown, *Woven Silk*, 15th century (made). Materials and Techniques: woven silk. Textile: Red silk, woven with a repeating design consisting of lobed lozenge-shaped compartments formed by leaves and enclosing floral devices geometrically arranged in green and yellow. Victoria and Albert Museum.

Figure 4: 9 - Silk Textiles – Spain 15th Century - The Metropolitan Museum of Art²⁰⁵



Figured Silk Weave Textile
From: The Metropolitan Museum
of Art, New York
Date: 15th Century
Culture: Spanish

Medium: Silk
Dimensions: 16.5 x 24.1 cm
Classification: Textiles-Woven
Accession Number: 07.62.72

²⁰⁵ Unknown, *Figured Silk Weave Textile*, c.15th Century. Medium: Silk. The Metropolitan Museum.

Characterisation of Gabriel

Gabriel holds a sceptre in his left hand and his right hand gestures upwards. The words of his salutation to Mary “*gratia plena, dominus tecum*” are legible on the white scroll that elegantly arcs across the panel in which he is depicted. His wings are created in a similar manner to the Italian tapestry stitch called *bargello* and reflect the naturalistic style and general interest in humanism of the times. His cape is vivid red and trimmed with gold piping; his sleeves are black, and his tunic, which is gathered by a thin cincture, is white, traditionally the colour symbolizing innocence, purity of soul and holiness of life.²⁰⁶ Black and white together symbolize humility and purity of life.²⁰⁷ The angel’s head is very gently tilted as if to hear Mary’s reply. His face is strong and peaceful, in supplication as he gazes upward, and his body appears to be in the action of kneeling or genuflecting. Gabriel’s attractive face is composed and kindly. His head is surrounded by a halo which is stamped and would have been completely golden in its original state. There is fine brush detailing on his hair and on the head of this angel is a small diadem to acknowledge his position as an archangel (Figure 4:7). Gabriel is positioned very close to Mary in the artwork however there is a clear division created by the black and gold frame between them, signifying that despite the intimacy of the conversation between them there still exists a barrier – which could be interpreted as Gabriel’s respect for Mary. Or the vertical division might simply be the material demands of the altar panel setting. Because Gabriel’s head is at the same height as Mary, it could be interpreted that they are somewhat equal in their pure, heavenly status. Gabriel is a member of the third triad of angels who are messengers between humankind and God in heaven and who execute the will of God in Renaissance theology.²⁰⁸ In this image he is seen delivering God’s message with graciousness and serenity.

²⁰⁶ Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols*, 30.

²⁰⁷ Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 151-52.

²⁰⁸ Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols*, 3.



Figure 4: 10 - Falcó, Nicolás. (c. 15th/16th). "The Madonna Annunciate; The Angel Gabriel" - details of Gabriel.

Characterisation of Mary

Mary is depicted as a young woman, and the deep crimson colour of her tunic indicates that she is of regal status.²⁰⁹ “Scarlet and crimson were the colour of luxury, of regal and ecclesiastical statues, but they also had a number of other connotations in the fifteenth century.”²¹⁰ They were used for the garments worn by bride and bridegroom in Spain, in Renaissance art, and it was traditional to clothe the Virgin Mary in red.²¹¹ Devotion to the Eucharist was central to the Franciscan practice thus regular reference in art is made to it: as in the crimson coloured garments which are associated with both wine and blood of the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacrificial shedding of blood (Isa 63:1-3).²¹² Crimson is also the “blood supplied by the maternal womb to nourish the male seed.”²¹³ As Mary stands at a small table, perhaps a *prie-dieu*, her gaze is downward, perhaps in contemplation or possibly reading a prayer book or the Bible. Gertrud Schiller states that:

the book is more about Mary, as ascribed by medieval theologians, as a mistress of all the seven Liberal Arts which lead to knowledge of God, and since they wished to set her, as the Mother of God, above all creatures, ascribed to her the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.²¹⁴

The artist has portrayed Mary’s composure as demure and humble, her face is youthful as she smiles softly, and her hair is beautiful.²¹⁵ These innocent features confirm in the mind of the viewer Mary’s purity. However, the viewer of the artwork, like the reader of the text, is left to consider why Mary does not seem anxious of the possibility of a scandal and negative impact on the impending consummation of her marriage. Is there a presumption, by both viewer and reader, of implicit trust in God by Mary? The cloak she wears is blue, the symbol of Heaven and heavenly love,²¹⁶ although very deep and intense in hue, suggesting a particularly emotional experience. It is unclear whether the colour pigments have changed over time because, depending on how the

²⁰⁹ John H. Munro, "The Anti-Red Shift – to the 'Dark Side': Colour Changes in Flemish Luxury Woollens, 1300 - 1550," *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 3, no. 1 (2007).

²¹⁰ Lesley K. Twomey, "Reading Red," in *The Fabric of Marian Devotion in Isabel De Villena's Vita Christi* (Woodbridge, UK: Tamesis, 2013), 96.

²¹¹ Twomey, *The Fabric of Marian Devotion*.

²¹² Twomey, *The Fabric of Marian Devotion*, 117.

²¹³ Twomey, *The Fabric of Marian Devotion*, 117.

²¹⁴ Schiller, *Iconography in Christian Art*, 1

²¹⁵ The face of Mary in this altarpiece is the same face as the face of Mary in Nicolas Falco’s work *Triptych of the Virgen de la Leche* which was created at the same time. Cf.

<http://www.cult.gva.es/mbav/data/es06038.htm>

²¹⁶ Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 151.

light comes off the panel, there is a deep green colour overlaying the blue colour in the lining of her cloak; if so then the green in this context references Mary's '*gran misericòrdia*' [great mercy].²¹⁷

Since this image comprises only of the figures of Mary and Gabriel against an elaborate gold background, focus moves to the dove representing the Holy Spirit. Because it is not actually overshadowing Mary's head, it is realistic to assume that Mary is yet to give her consent or conceive the Christ Child. The Holy Spirit is positioned above Mary's line of sight, and therefore she is presumably unaware of the Divine Presence. In her ignorance of the dove, Mary is relieved of the pressure of having to make the decision in the presence of the one who offers the invitation; therefore, she is not manipulated, coerced or intimidated into a reply she may think that she is duty-bound to make. She can freely give her assent of her own free will.²¹⁸ Mary's stillness seems to indicate her contemplation and Gabriel seems to be waiting for an answer. There is both tension and anticipation in this portrayed moment of the Annunciation pericope as Gabriel seems to be waiting for Mary's response. The gentle smile on Mary's lips suggests a willing or even a loving acquiescence to the angel's news.

²¹⁷ The details in Twomey's translation of Isabel de Villena's *Vita Christi*, state that this colour combination "symbolizes her '*gran misericòrdia*' [great mercy] (fol. 50r; I, 185)." Twomey, "Reading Red," 85. In folio 22 *verso* Twomey translates that one of "the Virgin's virtuous handmaids, Mercy [is] in green" Twomey, "Reading Red," 168. Mary herself is in "a mantle of blue brocade" Twomey, "Sor Isabel De Villena," 85. If the green colouration was deliberately created by the artist, and not discolouration of the paint pigments, which was then overlaid on the blue mantel, then this created garment supports the idea that these panels were intended for the chapel of Convent of the Trinity in Valencia where de Villena and her nuns could be reminded of her writings in *Vita Christi*.

²¹⁸ "Thirdly, that she might offer to God the free gift of her obedience: which she proved herself right ready to do, saying: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord.'" Thomas Aquinas, "The Summa Theologiæ of St. Thomas Aquinas," The New Avenant. accessed <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/4030.htm>.



Figure 4: 11 - Falcó, Nicolás. (c. 15th/16th). "The Madonna Annunciate; the Angel Gabriel" - details of Mary and the dove.

Art Analysis

The figures of Mary and the angel Gabriel are created in strong colouration and detail and yet the gentle curves and lines of their bodies and the volumes of fabric in their clothes, imply a very gracious and peaceful encounter between the two. The tightly packed composition within the frames adds to the intimacy of the supernatural event that is occurring between the two figures of Mary and Gabriel. Like the pericope of the Annunciation itself, only the exchange between the virgin and the celestial visitor are recorded. The pericope gives no details of where the Annunciation took place or how it happened. The artist Nicolás Falcó has depicted only the characters involved in the pericope, and through the script on the white ribbon, only part of the dialogue that took place between them. Just as the words and the dialogue between Gabriel and Mary in the pericope were the only clues to the significance to the event of the Annunciation, so too are the artist's representations of the characters. To the reader of the text, the phrasing of the language used in the pericope give only hints to what was happening and why it was happening; and the details of colour, texture, posture, expression and painted form of these characters communicate much about Gabriel and Mary themselves. Because the direction of the composition is toward the viewer, it makes the viewer personally involved and engaged with what is happening in the image. The three-dimensional effects created by the different textures of the background and the smoothness of the figures make the viewer's experience more real and more immediate. There are many lines within this work that move the viewer's eye in a cyclical motion. The swirling red colour in the cloak of Gabriel, the continuation of this colour in the bottom of the work allude to the fast fluid action of the energy of God and then the perpendicular block of the colour of red on Mary's tunic stabilize the motion. As Mary's head is bowed in acquiescence to the Holy Spirit, there is an implied line in her sight as she reads. The sceptre held by Gabriel also draws the viewer's eye toward the book. The dynamism created by the lines within the work meet at the intersection of the Scripture Mary is reading and reference the Word about to become flesh, within Mary.

The two figures are set against a background of hammered gold decorative motif of pomegranates and acanthus leaves.²¹⁹ The traditional Franciscan appreciation of Mary's close, personal association with the Eucharist is evident and immediately obvious because of the panels' proximity to the altar. In a chapel space, under this scene, the viewer would have been reminded of the faith of Mary and been offered an opportunity for an intimate experience with God, as the sacrificial bread underwent transubstantiation.

Artworks produced in 20th Century Australia

Between the 1980s and 1990s the implementation of the World Wide Web was taking place and this technology changed how the world would interact. The art world of 1990 no longer enjoyed the reliable patronage of the Church, galleries, *Salons* or even museums. Instead it was the internationalization of the European auction houses and the Japanese buyers choosing art for investments as well as the introduction of ever more innovations, such as telephone bidding, and satellite links that opened up the once privileged market to the more open world-wide market. With these changes came greater artistic influences as buyer's preferences became identified and targeted. Specialised exhibitions, galleries and competitions and the role of the art critic began to take prominence. In 1985 the Mandorla Art Award for contemporary religious art in Australia was established, making it Australia's most significant thematic Christian art prize. At this time, the biennial Blake Prize, which was established in 1951 was the most well-known religious art competition.

The selected artworks for this section of the research were created in a secular Western society with many and varied Christian demoninations and each of these artworks has a seemingly completely different interpretation of the Lukan pericope of the

²¹⁹ The pomegranates in this motif could refer to the pomegranates of the OT in the Song of Solomon or the decoration of the garments of the high priest or the Temple of Jerusalem or refer to the coat of arms adopted by Ferdinand and Isabel as King and Queen of Granada. Jack Freiberg, *Bramante's Tempietto, the Roman Renaissance, and the Spanish Crown* (West Nyack, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), electronic resource, 33, 129; additionally, "The pomegranate is a s symbol of eternity and fertility, because of its many seeds ... the many seeds in blood-red juice also equate to life out of death." Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols*, 56; also, "The Tree of Jesse is often based on the acanthus." James Hall, *Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), electronic resource, 146. Thus, it could be an artistic allusion to the prophecy of Isa 11:1.

Annunciation. Both were submitted in 1990 for a contemporary religious art competition, the Mandorla Art Award.²²⁰

Artwork 3: “Ante Lucem”
Paul, John. (1990).



Figure 4: 12 - Paul, John. (1990). *Ante Lucem*.

²²⁰ See www.mandorlaart.com



Figure 4: 13 - Paul, John. (1990). *Ante Lucem* without frame.

Historical Context

Ante Lucem meaning “before the light”²²¹ is by Australian artist, John Paul who is from one of the most isolated cities in the world: Perth in Western Australia. When the maxi yacht, *Australia II* won the America’s Cup in Newport, Rhode Island in 1983 it thrust Perth into the international spotlight because the next challenge race would then

²²¹ John Paul, *Ante Lucem (before the Light)*, 1990. Acrylic on board. New Norcia Museum and Art Gallery, WA.

be held in the winning yacht's home city, Perth, Australia in 1987. In the few years just prior to the creation of this artwork, *Australia II* winning of the America's Cup was by far one of the most important events for Perth because it drew international attention to the people of that part of the world and helped to stimulate an economy that was recovering from the stock market crash of 1987. For many years during the 1980s, Australia enjoyed many new discoveries in mineral and resource exploration and became a major exporter of minerals.²²² It was also attracting a lot of attention as a tourist destination and a place for higher learning with affordable higher education costs.

Artist John Paul (1953 -), regarded as a figurative painter, studied graphic design and Fine Arts in Perth, Western Australia in the early 1970s. From 1984 to 1994 his work was seen in five solo exhibitions in both Perth and Sydney. In 1990 he won the Mandorla Art Prize for *Ante Lucem* and has been teaching since 1980.²²³ In the past, Paul has worked with three different mediums: painting, works on paper and with prints and graphics.²²⁴ Now, however, he works only with monochromatic gouache.

Material Culture

John Paul's body of work demonstrates his many and varied artistic skills. In this selected artwork, the artist's unique perspective on the Annunciation is captured in acrylic paint which is sometimes thickly applied and could be quite easily mistaken for an oil painting. This relatively small acrylic painting is on a board, 30 centimetres by 24.5 centimetres with a black frame that is 57 centimetres high by 52 centimetres wide, in which the painting is surrounded by a vibrant red mounting with gold trim. Its function or purpose is meant to evoke contemplation or inspiration.

Until quite recently, *Ante Lucem* hung in the Art Gallery of the New Norcia Benedictine Community, in New Norcia in Western Australia. The Mandorla Art

²²² For the relative statistics see: Bill McKay, Ian Lambert, and Shige Miyazaki, "Special Article - the Australian Mining Industry: From Settlement to 2000 " Australian Bureau of Statistics, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/94713ad445ff1425ca25682000192af2/93136e734ff62aa2ca2569de00271b10>

²²³ Allan McCulloch, Susuan McCulloch, and Emily McCulloch Childs, *The New McCulloch's Encyclopedia of Australian Art*, Fourth ed. (Fitzroy BC, Vic: Aus Art Editions in association with The Miegunyah Press, 2006), 765.

²²⁴ "Australian Art Sales Digest," John Furphy Pty. Ltd., <https://www.aasd.com.au/index.cfm/search/?Name=john+paul&all=0&Scope=0&Submit=>.

Award winners are periodically exhibited in the New Norcia Museum and Art Gallery and in 2015 when a full retrospective was held for 12 months, 33,000 visitors attended the gallery. As an acquisitive art prize, all winners of the Mandorla Art Award are housed in the New Norcia Benedictine Community under a Memorandum of Understanding between the Mandorla Art Award and the Monks. The winner of the art competition was widely celebrated in many forms of media.²²⁵

Iconography

Period of the Artwork

This scene is played out in a domestic dwelling, in a desert near a mine site located in Western Australia. This is alluded to as the eye is drawn to the opened door revealing the outside red earth, at the edge of a roadside marked by a yellow line. The presence of a FIFO miner with wings and in a hard hat (Figure 4:14), seen running off into a red-earthed desert scape dates it to the end of the twentieth century when the demand for workers at isolated mine sites was so immediate, and so great, that there was no time to construct accommodation for the workers, so they had to be brought in by aircraft from regional towns and cities.²²⁶

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²²⁵ The winning artworks are celebrated through the associated publications and media outlets of the many sponsors of the Mandorla Art Award; also, through the ABC Radio Program – The Spirit of Things, *Art Almanac* – an online magazine and through various Christian organisations' chosen media.

²²⁶ FIFO is an abbreviation for a miner who "flies in and flies out" to work for a period of several days or weeks to a mine site.



Figure 4: 14 - *Ante Lucem* – background details.

Characterisation of Gabriel

The artist has chosen not to use any of the traditional symbols or motifs when depicting the angel Gabriel. Instead, the artist has characterized Gabriel as part Maori warrior with unusual facial markings (Figure 4:15) and part Maori folk-lore character (called "*patupaiarehe*") with a quiver in which are stems of wheat (Figure 4:15).²²⁷ In Maori story-telling, the *patupaiarehe* would sometimes put people under a spell and steal them away. In this unusual interpretation, Gabriel is in a dynamic posture, as he intrudes (evident by the forceful position of his feet) into the personal space of Mary, whether it is in haste or excitement is unclear. Both figures are looking in the same direction towards the left of the viewer out passed the frame of the image. The brown colour of his shoes and hat has traditionally signified mortification, mourning and humility however, in this case, it would be considered just part of Gabriel's attire because these attributes are not normally associated with the angel Gabriel.²²⁸ The angel Gabriel is wearing some kind of green scaly (printed) undershirt over which it a

²²⁷ The absence of Gabriel's *whakapapa* – or genealogy as part of the tattoo on his face could be an artistic decision or because Gabriel is an angel and therefore has no ancestry. Furthermore, the absence of any tattooing on centre forehead, which is rank, position in life lines of rank – *hapu* – is curious because in Tradition Gabriel is considered to be an archangel. See David. R. Simmons and Ko Te Riria, *Moko Rangatira: Māori Tattoo* (Auckland, NZ: Reed, 1999), 25. Interestingly, Maori weaponry does not include arrows or the need of quivers. See Basil Keane, "Riri - Traditional Māori Warfare - Rākau Māori – Māori Weapons and Their Uses," in *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*.

²²⁸ Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols*, 29.

green collarless polo shirt. On Gabriel's pocket is the musical symbol of the treble clef alluding to his position amongst the angelic choirs. His large wings are life-like and extended. He uses one of his wings to cover Mary.²²⁹ This portrayal of Gabriel is very different to what a viewer expects to find in a painting of the Annunciation, but the overall impression is essentially the same. Gabriel's arrival is generally understood to be sudden and unexpected and his person is understood to be intimidating. In this image these characteristics are achieved by the strength and movement (of his body and wings) and his uniqueness (from the unusualness of his features and of his garb).



Figure 4: 15 - Paul, John. (1990). *Ante Lucem* – facial details.

Characterisation of Mary

The depiction of Mary in this work is not archetypal. Mary is wearing an inscrutable expression on her rather pallid, strong and mature face on which the corners of her mouth turn slightly downward; her cloche style bonnet is trimmed with lace detail (Figure 4:15). The brooch at the v-join of her collar appears to be made up of a large

²²⁹ Just as the rabbis commented (*Midrash Genesis Rabbah* 39.7; *Midrash Ruth Rabbah* 3.9) that Ruth was chaste in her wording when she asked Boaz to have marital relations with her by saying to him “I am Ruth your handmaid, spread therefore your cloak (literally, “wing”: *kanaph*) over your handmaid for you are my next-of-kin” (Ruth 3:9). *Tallith*, is another Aramaic-Hebrew word for cloak, which is derived from *tellal* meaning ‘shadow’.

ruby encircled with small pearls. The rubies symbolise the blood of Christ, and pearls which are regarded as “the most precious jewel” are a symbol of salvation, which is “worth more than all the treasures of earth.”²³⁰ The brooch draws the viewer’s attention to the grey undergarment. Traditionally, grey is considered a lifeless colour and is used to signify mortification, mourning and humility.²³¹ The use of the colour grey, as seen on Mary’s undergarment and her expressionless face, leaves the viewer wondering why Mary’s emotions would be in such a melancholic state; which is different to Mary’s facial expressions in the other artworks. The original text also makes no inference of Mary being melancholy. Mary is seated in an ornate chair which is on a colourfully designed fringed floor rug in a domestic setting. A posy of banksia flowers, blue Leschenaultia and wattle sprigs, which are a reference to the spring wildflowers of Western Australia, rests on her lap as the winged *patupaiarehe* warrior-like character grips her right hand (Figure 4:16).²³² The other hand is obscured from view by the close proximity of the winged *patupaiarehe* warrior. Mary’s whole demeanour is somewhat difficult to read because it seems wooden and yet yielding simultaneously. This version of Mary is not of a young woman nor a particularly attractive one, which may surprise or even disappoint the viewer who is used to seeing Mary traditionally portrayed as young and beautiful.

²³⁰ Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols*, 41, 43.

²³¹ Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols*, 29.

²³² Also known as “*tūrehu*” - “Some Māori are fair-skinned, pale, albino or red-headed people” or “fairy folk - mythical being of human form with light skin and fair hair” John C. Moorfield, “*Tūrehu*,” in *The Māori Dictionary* (Auckland: Longman/Pearson Education New Zealand 2011).

“*Patupaiarehe*” are “fairy folk - fair-skinned mythical people who live in the bush on mountains. Although like humans in appearance, the belief is that they do not eat cooked food and are afraid of fires.” John C. Moorfield, “*Patupaiarehe*,” in *The Māori Dictionary* (Auckland: Longman/Pearson Education New Zealand, 2011). In Maori folklore these pale-skinned, fairylike, supernatural beings would sometimes put people under a spell and steal them away. The *patupaiarehe* had light skin, and red or fair hair. Historian James Cowan states that “they were a lighter complexion than Maori; their hair was of a dull golden or reddish hue, *urukehu*, such as is sometimes seen in Maori of today.” James Cowan, “The Patu-Paiarehe: Notes on Maori Folk-Tales of the Fairy People. Part Ii,” *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 30, no. 3(119) (1921). Unlike Māori, they were never tattooed. Martin Wikaira, ‘Patupaiarehe - Patupaiarehe and ponaturi’, Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, accessed <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/patupaiarehe/page-1>.



Figure 4: 16 - Paul, John. (1990). *Ante Lucem* – flowers, hands and chair details.

In this artwork, the artist seems to have presumed Mary's emotions to be in turmoil as she contemplates the magnitude of what she is being presented with by the angel. Or possibly, everything is happening so fast, Mary has yet to process and consider the consequences of what is taking place. In this depiction of Mary, the artist challenges the viewer to see Mary from another perspective and to perhaps see her role in the history of salvation differently as well.

Since the Early European artists were commissioned, they were informed by theologians. This contemporary work was for entry in an art award, so the artist would therefore be personally responsible for researching and interpreting the theology that was to be communicated in the submitted work. This unusual depiction of the Annunciation challenges so many aspects of the Lukan pericope in the mind of the viewer, not in the least is Mary's response. It is reasonable to surmise that the rushed entry into this confined domestic space by the winged *patupaiarehe* warrior-like angel has caused everything to be moved from its position, as he accosts Mary, whose legs are firmly crossed, by throwing his leg over her body. This unification of the two figures forms a heart shape and strongly implies a sexual intimacy but the expression on the face of Mary does not indicate that this intimacy is enjoyed or welcomed; in fact, it appears more like resignation or submission or even sheer terror – because

angels in the Old Testament are terrifying. The artist may have been referencing Ruth when she asked Boaz to have marital relations with her by saying to him “I am Ruth your handmaid, spread therefore your cloak (literally, “wing”: *kanaph*) over your handmaid for you are my next-of-kin” (Ruth 3:9).

The presence of a dog (Figure 4:17) traditionally symbolizes the watchfulness and fidelity of a figure, and by its proximity to Mary is safe to assume it refers to her.²³³ The apparent chaos caused by Gabriel’s arrival, evident in the disarranged furniture, the figure of a fly-in fly-out (FIFO) angel rushing off into a desert mining landscape in the background and a dog has not flustered the figure of Mary in any way. Traditional motifs relating to the Holy Spirit, such as a dove hovering above Mary’s head, are linked to what Gabriel said to Mary in Luke 1: 35. None these motifs or symbols of the Holy Spirit are present, and therefore the viewer may be left wondering if Mary’s eventual pregnancy was through the agency of the Holy Spirit or perhaps through the intervention of the angel Gabriel as this depiction of the Maori warrior *patupaiarehe* angel suggests. Or maybe the absence of the Divine Presence motif is meant to imply no divine intervention in the conception of Mary’s forthcoming child and that the child was conceived normally.

Art Analysis

The vibrant and strong colour palate is dominated by Mary’s red dress which is the painting’s focal point (and is further accentuated by the red mounting and black frame). On the aqua coloured table is a knife and a single fish on a plate.²³⁴ In the background, is an open brown carved door, through which a FIFO miner with wings (probably referencing an angel) and in a hard hat can be seen running off into a red-earthed desert scape, with his arms up and holding what appears to be a bow.²³⁵ The many lines and irregular angles in this composition refer to a quick and sudden movement. Other items in the room are to scale. The painting’s surface is a combination of both smooth and rough brush strokes, and details, such as the patterns on the rug and chair are executed in such a way as to give effect rather than information.

²³³ Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 15.

²³⁴ “A knife is most frequently shown as an instrument of martyrdom.” Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 176. The most frequent use of the word fish relates to Christ. Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 18.

²³⁵ Abbreviation for a miner who “flies in and flies out” to work for a period of several days or weeks to a mine site.

At first glance *Ante Lucem* appears to be a modern-day version of a work done by an early Dutch master by the inclusion of the costume on the figure of Mary. However, closer inspection reveals very few recognisable icons traditionally associated with the Annunciation. The many angular lines and the awkward positioning of the furniture, walls and floor within the work, all indicate the environment having been disturbed by strong, rapid movement. Additionally, the presence of a dog, which appears to be circling the chair excitedly in which Mary is seated, has added to the pandemonium created by the arrival of the winged Maori warrior *patupaiarehe* representation of Gabriel. By using the figures in this way, the artist communicates that the arrival of an angel is a tumultuous event. The presence of this Maori folk-lore like character, seems misplaced as the viewer considers the possibility that it is an oblique reference to the Nephilim (who are peoples of gigantic stature with superhuman strength and who the offspring of marriages between "daughters of humans" and "sons of God") in Genesis 6 and Numbers 13.²³⁶ It also challenges the idea of Mary's child being a fusion of two natures: human and divine elements, thus challenging Jesus' full humanity and full divinity. Its mixture of styles, genres and symbols, and the absence of readily distinguishable iconography, make this artwork challenging to relate to the Annunciation without some kind of commentary.

In this artwork can be seen the many references to the theories, ideas and opinions that were circulating in the world of Christian theology following Vatican II and, in the decades preceding the artwork's creation when not only the moral authority of the Roman Catholic Church was being questioned but her dogmatic teachings as well. During this time in the last century, the pursuit of empirical evidence was considered fundamental in academic thought, and the historicity of Jesus' was the subject of much research. Many of the ideas that were the subject of speculation or debate are evident in Paul's artwork; including the possibility of the virgin being raped by the divine or

²³⁶ Nephilim in the Bible, Hebrew word of no known meaning, denoting peoples of gigantic stature with superhuman strength. The term is translated as "giants" in the Authorized Version. The Book of Genesis refers to Nephilim as the offspring of marriages between "daughters of humans" and "sons of God." Paul Lagasse and Columbia University, "Nephilim," in *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (Columbia University Press, 2018). In Gen 6:4 "The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown." As well as, Num 13:33 "There we saw the Nephilim (the Anakites come from the Nephilim); and to ourselves we seemed like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them."

the angelic, to the questioning of the Incarnation itself being nothing more than the stuff of legends or folklore. It seems to be questioning and challenging many previously understood or assumed ideas about the Lukan pericope of the Annunciation: including Mary's characterisation, her response to the angel Gabriel and his role in the event, the characterisation of Gabriel himself and even the agency of God in this conception. The viewer is left with more questions than answers and a disquietude brought about by having the things one believes in being presented in such a confronting format. The overall effect of this artwork is charged with immediacy, energy and emotion; and in many ways reflects the flux of theories, ideas and opinions in the fast-moving pace of the secular world of 1990.

**Artwork 4: "Triptych of the Annunciation"
Oldfield, A. (1990).**



Figure 4: 17



Figure 4: 18 – Artwork 4 Oldfield, Alan. (1990). “The Annunciation.”

Historical Context

The artwork by another Australian artist, Alan John Torning Oldfield (1943-2004), titled *Triptych of the Annunciation*, was also submitted for the 1990 Mandorla Art Award and presently hangs in the New Norcia Museum and Galleries. The historical context in which this artwork was produced was the same as the previous artist, John Paul. Oldfield has twice won the Blake Prize: in 1987, *A High and perpetual shewing of Christ's mother according to Julian of Norwich* and in 1992 *Raft III & Rosemary Valadon – Before the Fall*.²³⁷ During his life he was an artist (painter), curator and a designer for theatre and film in New South Wales as well as a member of the full-time lecturing staff at the Alexander Mackie College of Advanced Education in Sydney (later known as College of Fine Arts, as part of the University of New South Wales), where he remained until just before his death. In 1991 he was promoted to Associate Professor.²³⁸

Oldfield's early work was characterised by "crisp, clean abstract paintings which combined a hedonist sensibility with the austerity of hard edge abstraction."²³⁹ His open line drawings of interiors were Hockney-like in the casting of strong shadows for the furniture and chairs within. His later paintings were in a more meditative style influenced by Italian Renaissance art and his religious faith. He was also active as a theatre/set designer.²⁴⁰ Oldfield was born in Sydney's industrial inner west and left school at the age of fourteen with his Intermediate Certificate and enrolled in the National Art School at East Sydney Technical College. In his youth, he found spiritual solace in the Anglo-Catholic traditions of Sydney's Christ Church St Laurence. This stimulated him to look more to the great aesthetic traditions of medieval and renaissance Europe. Physical and spiritual, explorations and journeys were a characteristic of much of his later painting. Oldfield created two other artworks titled "*Annunciation*" in 1980 and also "*Annunciation, III*," in 1991; both of these artworks were sold at auction and all of the *Annunciation* series use the same colour palates. Oldfield has completed many other works with religious themes however he varied the

²³⁷ Alan Oldfield shared the 1987 Blake Prize with Ian Grant's work "*The Monks Cloak*."

²³⁸ Olivia Bolton et al., "Oldfield, Alan," Design & Art Australia Online, <http://www.daaao.org.au/bio/alan-oldfield/>

²³⁹ Bolton et al., "Oldfield, Alan".

²⁴⁰ "He was the designer for *Rumours* and *Afterworlds* for the Sydney Dance company from 1978 to 1980, and also designed *Beyond Twelve* for the Australian Ballet in 1987." Bolton et al., "Oldfield, Alan".

style and colour palates. He preferred the mediums of painting, paper and with prints and graphics.²⁴¹

Material Culture

The *Triptych of the Annunciation* is an acrylic painting, measuring 78 centimetres by 109 centimetres in size. The black and timber frame in which it is housed has gold coloured acrylic paint that has been applied with a brush around the frames of each of the panels. Because of its size it can be relatively easily moved. Where it is displayed, a viewer can stand before the artwork and comfortably inspect its details at eye level in the gallery which is indirectly illuminated. The work is divided into three panels, each with a specific scene depicting key moments of salvation history.

Iconography

Historical Period

The clean lines, strong colours and uncluttered minimalism with which each of the scenes are depicted in the *Triptych of the Annunciation* were stylistic features of artists such as Picasso, Hockney and Matisse. In this work, Oldfield has melded all three styles, creating his own unique style, a practice that was common in artistic circles of late twentieth century Australia.²⁴²

Characterisation of Gabriel

The facial features of Gabriel's are barely distinguishable. He is wearing a wide-sleeved, long loose garment called a dalmatic, which is a vestment worn by deacons, bishops and monarchs at their coronation.²⁴³ His feet hang softly showing his elevation is effortless as he hovers toward the top of the image. He is positioned parallel to the other angels in each of the panels of the triptych. The colour purple has always been associated with royalty and the purple sash across Gabriel's body indicates his elite status among the angels.²⁴⁴ His large wings are handsome in their

²⁴¹ "Australian Art Sales Digest". accessed

<https://www.aasd.com.au/index.cfm/search/?Name=alan+oldfield&all=1&Scope=2&Submit=>

²⁴² "Mix Tape 1980s: Appropriation, Subculture, Critical Style," National Gallery of Victoria, https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/media_release/mix-tape-1980s-appropriation-subculture-critical-style/.

²⁴³ Joseph Braun, "Dalmatic," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Kevin Knight (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908).

²⁴⁴ Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols*, 152.

simplicity. The design on the thin scapular is intricate in detail. Even though Gabriel faces the viewer, his eyes are lowered – perhaps in reverence or perhaps in prayer. He has one hand raised with two fingers extended symbolizing the two-fold nature of Jesus: human and divine nature. Three of his other fingers are bent symbolizing the Trinity. His raised hand could also be in the manner of an ancient orator. Gabriel's physical proportions make him shorter than Mary if they were to be placed side by side. Unlike the gospel account, the angel's gentle composure is reassuring and commanding as he appears more like a sentinel holding a sabre than a messenger holding a sceptre.

Characterisation of Mary

Stylistically, Mary's face resembles that of Gabriel. Furthermore, her face is pale, fresh and simple, her eyes either lowered or closed and her mouth in a quiet smile and otherwise lacking the details of the artworks examined earlier. Across her abdomen, which is belted by a red sash, Mary's arms are gently folded leaving the viewer to speculate why.²⁴⁵ Is Mary crossing her arms in prayer, as she modestly draws the edges of her veil together? Is she protecting the presence of the Holy Child within her? Or are her arms embracing her abdomen in longing anticipation for the child she has just consented to have? The white of her veil speaks of her purity and the blue of her dress indicates heavenly truth, her spiritual love, constancy and fidelity.²⁴⁶ She faces but does not look at the viewer; she is quietly composed, eyes lowered as if in contemplation. The lilies in the deep blue vase beside her (Figure 4:14) refer to her virginity. The purple coloured trim on the collar and hem of Mary's garment allude to both sorrow and penitence, also love and truth but also reminds the viewer of Mary's regal status.²⁴⁷ In this minimalist depiction of Mary, the artist communicates that Mary is an uncomplicated figure; reassuring in her recognisability. There are no motifs or symbols referring to promises in the Old Testament related to Mary other than the branch connecting the centre panel to the panel on the viewer's left, which refers to the Old Testament prophecy that "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isa 11:1).

²⁴⁵ The colour red is associated with "passion, blood, and hate, of power and action, of sin and suffering" has been placed about her waist at approximately where she would carry the Divine Child. Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols*, 29.

²⁴⁶ Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols*, 29.

²⁴⁷ Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols*, 29.

A feature of this artwork is for the viewer to constantly re-evaluate what is seen. Notably absent from this artwork is any readily identifiable symbol or motif that denotes the presence of the Holy Spirit. However, the inclusion of the Holy Spirit in this contemporary work of art is very subtle. It is communicated as a beam of light which is difficult to immediately detect because of the many shadows created by the different light sources. A beam of side light, diagonally crossing the triptych from the top of the first panel [*Expulsion from Eden*] into the second panel [*The Annunciation*] and continuing into the third panel [*The Resurrection*] when the triptych is read from left to right is the way this artist depicts the Holy Spirit. This theatrically dramatic side lighting in this contemporary artwork communicates the existence of the presence of the Holy Spirit before Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden to the resurrection where the side lighting finishes on the side of the angel's head. Once identifying the presence of the Holy Spirit, the viewer is prompted to consider which moment in the Annunciation pericope the artist has depicted. Is it the time Mary has just given her “*fiat*” to Gabriel and is about to be “overshadow[ed] by the Holy Spirit” (Lk 1:35)? Or is it the moment when the Holy Spirit is overshadowing Mary, and Gabriel is witness to the presence of the Holy Spirit at Mary's conception of Jesus? If it is the former moment, then idea of Gabriel's presence being in the role of guardian of Mary and the Divine Child she now carries, is apposite. The original text of the pericope does not mention Gabriel's presence or absence at the time of the conception of the Divine Child. Because this artwork should be read in its entirety from left to right, its rendering of the Annunciation pericope is placed only halfway through the story of the salvation history.

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Figure 4: 19 - Oldfield, Alan. (1990). "Triptych of the Annunciation" - vase, lilies and Mary in detail.

Art Analysis

The artist's understanding of the power and dramatic effect of theatre are used effectively in the composition of this artwork. The gold colour of the frame not only highlights the artwork but the importance of the subject matter which it portrays. In the top part of the painting, is a blue sky and what appears to be a faint remainder of a few clouds can be seen through window-like apertures.²⁴⁸ Hovering in front of these is the winged angel Gabriel holding a sceptre, dressed similarly to the other angels in the artwork. On the far left of *The Annunciation* painting is a long thin branch which continues through to the adjacent image of *The Expulsion from Eden* making the link for the viewer between the two events. Alternatively, it could be viewed as the "tree of knowledge (of good and evil)" in Genesis 2:17 or the "tree of life" in Genesis 3:17, 3:22, 3:34 and Proverbs 3:18, 15:4 or Revelations 22:2, 22:14, 22:19. The theme for Mandorla that year was "Annunciation," so the artist has seen the link between these three events. This is the story of salvation history. Positioned between two tumultuous events, *The Expulsion from Eden* and *The Resurrection of Christ from the Tomb*, *The Annunciation* is by contrast a calm and serene image because the figures are not in a dynamic posture. This work is done in acrylic paint. At the bottom of the painting of the Annunciation is a concave step drawing the viewer into this specific area, an intimate space - possibly that of the sanctuary. However, there is no mention of the sanctuary or of the Temple in the Lukan text and there are no other symbols of the temple. Once focus is on the happenings within this frame of the artwork, a sense of serenity, calm and order is recognised by the viewer. Despite the crisp and clean abstract rendering of *The Annunciation* painting, the influence of the Italian Renaissance style reveals his religious sensibility within the artwork's sharp simplicity. Even though there is no visible symbol or motif indicating the Divine Presence, the peaceful atmosphere evoked in this visual narrative suggests it through the use of lighting and challenges the viewer to contemplate the power of God not otherwise obviously represented within this artwork.

²⁴⁸ A window in Christian art symbolically "suggests penetration without violation and destruction." Sill, *A Handbook of Symbols*, 136.

By centralising *The Annunciation* in this artwork, it emphasizes the significance of the Incarnation in salvation history as well as providing the viewer with a heightened sense of intimacy in the enclosed and peaceful space. Furthermore, having the image framed within the actual frame itself adds to the viewer's experience of witnessing the Annunciation event within a private, personal space. In contrast to the figures in the images on either side of her, Mary's composure is very passive and contemplative (which is consistent with Mary's disposition in the Lukan text) as she gently leans back against the table behind her, over which a small section of her white veil drapes. Mary's white veil implies her innocence and purity and the table is an ordinary everyday item; which when combined together allude to the purity of the life of Mary.

In the *Triptych of the Annunciation*, Oldfield has composed a succinct account of the history of salvation in which the Incarnation is central. The repetition of colours used throughout the artwork gives a continuity to the story of salvation. The familiar references to the established artistic traditions of the Italian Renaissance also reinforce the continuity in the narrative.²⁴⁹ The stylistically modern interpretation of the Lukan pericope of the Annunciation (Lk 1:28-38) makes it relevant to the viewer by showing this old and well-known story as it is understood in the contemporary context of an art gallery or art competition. Whilst initially the separated panels seem to be connected, closer inspection reveals that they are quite different scenes of an ongoing story. This artwork relies heavily on the emotion it evokes. The contrasts made between the despair and fear created in the Old Testament account of the *Expulsion from Eden*, to the peace and order brought about by the fulfilment of God's Messianic promise to humankind in the *Annunciation* in the New Testament to the joy and power and excitement of the *Resurrection of Christ* takes the viewer through the spectrum of human emotion before leaving the viewer with a sense of wonder and awe for God. It is important to recognise the centrality of the figure of Mary in this artwork; for within her womb is Jesus, the Christ. Moreover, to her left, at the very centre of the artwork is a blue vase containing a stem of lilies alluding to and acknowledging the virginal purity of this woman, which confirms the identity of the child within her womb.

²⁴⁹ Masaccio, (born Tommaso di Ser Giovanni di Simone) Masaccio, *The Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* 1425. Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine.; Luca Giordano, *The Annunciation*, 1672. Oil on canvas. The Met; Pietro Perugino, *San Francesco Al Prato Resurrection*, 1499. 233 cm × 165 cm (92 in × 65 in). Pinacoteca Vaticana; Giordano, *The Annunciation*.

In Oldfield's artwork are echoes of Pope John Paul II's Papal Encyclical of March 25, 1987 *Redemptoris Mater* regarding the Lukan account of the Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38). In the centre panel of the triptych, the *Annunciation*, is an allusion to Section 9, *Part I – Mary in the Mystery of Christ Redemptoris Mater* is clear:

This is indeed a high point among all the gifts of grace conferred in the history of man and of the universe: Mary is "full of grace," because it is precisely in her that the Incarnation of the Word, the hypostatic union of the Son of God with human nature, is accomplished and fulfilled.

The positioning of the blue and white vase highlights the point made by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical, *Redemptoris Mater* that "... the election of Mary is wholly exceptional and unique. Hence also the singularity and uniqueness of her place in the mystery of Christ."²⁵⁰ Oldfield makes the same distinction in the artwork as John Paul II does in *Redemptoris Mater* – that the Annunciation is primarily Christological because of the identification of the child whom she carries, not Mariological.²⁵¹ Thus, Mary's virginal conception is not only fitting but also fundamental to the identity of Christ.²⁵²

²⁵⁰ In his Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Mater*, John Paul II explains "election" as "The fruit of this love is 'the election' of which the Letter to the Ephesians speaks. On the part of God, this election is the eternal desire to save humankind through a sharing in his own life (cf. 2 Pt. 1:4) in Christ: it is salvation through a sharing in supernatural life." Part 1 – Mary in the Mystery of the Church - Point 8.

²⁵¹ John Paul II, "Redemptoris Mater," The Holy See, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031987_redemptoris-mater.html;
http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031987_redemptoris-mater.html

²⁵² Aquinas, "The Summa Theologiæ of St. Thomas Aquinas". accessed <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/4030.htm>.

Chapter V: Findings and Discussion

In the verses preceding the Annunciation pericope, the reader learns that Herod is king (Lk 1:5) and this provides an historical context for the angel Gabriel's appearance in Nazareth to a Jewish woman named Mary. In the chosen pericope the Lukan author gives no other details of when, where or how this event took place. This focuses the reader's attention on the event itself, on the two protagonists and what they say; thus, engaging the reader to contemplate the significance of the event.

When considering each of the artworks, it is important to remain cognizant of the fact that each portrays a specific moment in time of the Annunciation pericope. Prior to his announcement to Mary, the angel Gabriel was known for bearing good news to others in the Old Testament and his messages always pointed to the coming messiah.

The Rothschild Prayer Book *Annunciation* portrays Gabriel as he kneels before Mary who is being overshadowed by the Holy Spirit represented by a dove, and it presumes Mary's affirmative reply. The many symbols within the artwork are used to illustrate Mary's virginal state, and the consequences of Mary's "*fiat*" is represented by Mary being illustrated in the position of the tabernacle - the New Ark of the New Covenant. There is also an oblique allusion to Nazareth but no mention of Joseph.

Nicolás Falcó's altarpiece "*The Madonna Annunciate; The Angel Gabriel*" portrays the angel Gabriel halfway through his dialogue with Mary, whose expression could be interpreted as one of "pondering." The Holy Spirit, also portrayed in the form of a dove, is hovering between the two figures of Mary and Gabriel. Like the pericope itself, there is no detail of when or where this event occurred; however, the close association of Mary with the Eucharist that the Franciscans promoted, can be seen in the fact that the artwork is a panel of an altarpiece. There is no reference to Joseph in this artwork either.

The moment depicted in the artwork *Ante Lucem* by John Paul shows a Maori warrior-like angel Gabriel, whose arrival is dynamic and purposeful in contrast to the figure of Mary who is sitting in a chair, gazing out to the left of the viewer, beyond the frame.

There is no traditional artistic reference to the presence of the Holy Spirit, or any other characters relating to the pericope. At the time of this artwork's creation, the concept that the Annunciation was a theologoumenon was embraced and promoted by many prominent theologians, challenging the Church to move with the cultural trends. I believe that the artist also wanted to challenge the viewer's traditional understanding of the Annunciation and to consider it from the perspective of Mary and from the contemporary perspective of the viewer. Thus, the artist's unconventional composition evokes from the viewers questions like, "did this really happen?" or "how would I respond if an angel approached me?" or "did Mary really have a choice in being a part of God's plan?"

Alan Oldfield's central artwork of the *Triptych of the Annunciation* makes only a subtle reference to the Holy Spirit, through the use of a diagonal light beam. The presence of the branch in the lower left-hand corner could be a reference to the "shoot from the stump of Jesse" or the "tree of knowledge," or the "tree of life" in Genesis. The vase and lilies allude to Mary's virginity, and the setting is an indoor-outdoor space. Once again, no reference is made to Joseph. Gabriel hovering to the viewer's left above Mary suggests no interaction between the two figures. Mary's pose is ambiguous because she could be contemplating the Christ Child already within her or she could be resting against a table, oblivious to the arrival of the angel Gabriel and their encounter is yet to take place. Having the *Annunciation* as the middle panel of this triptych, communicates to the viewer the pre-eminence of the Incarnation in salvation history. By positioning Mary in the very middle of the entire work, the viewer can see that the role of Mary was central to God's plan.

CHAPTER VI: Summary of Key Points of the Analysis of the Artworks.

In the universally unique event of the Annunciation, vast contrasts in perspectives can be seen in the five hundred years separating the Early European Renaissance and contemporary Australian artworks selected for this research. Within only a dozen or so years¹ after the creation of the selected Early European Renaissance artworks, faith and reason came to be regarded as conflicting with each other within Western Tradition, with philosophy and science contradicting the truths of theology. This way of thinking sowed the early seeds of modernism, so that eventually by the twentieth century the supernatural is all but excluded. Evidence of this can be seen in how the twentieth-century contemporary Australian artist, John Paul depicts the Annunciation pericope. Paul's artwork challenges Mary's virginal conception of Jesus through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The artist does so by hinting at possible pagan roots for the conception in the Annunciation story by alluding to a folkloric figure, the *patupaiarehe* or the Old Testament tale of the Nephilim who are the offspring of marriages between "daughters of humans" and "sons of God." Oldfield's Holy Spirit is extremely subtle, and not readily identifiable and could be easily overlooked because of the many different light sources casting many shadows in different directions. This suggests that the artist did not want to align his work too closely to the Lukan author's view yet wanted to communicate his openness to the contemporary ideas of Mary's conception of Jesus. Thus, the viewer is at risk of not knowing or understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in the Annunciation pericope and could be excused for assuming that Mary's child was conceived in the normal way.

Yet, Mary, and her role and response were foremost in the minds of the Lukan author and the artists; each dealing with the subject of her virginal conception of Jesus from the context in which they were considered. This research of the text reveals that far from being a passive spectator in the Annunciation event, Mary is at the centre of it. She is not a naïve ingénue, whose purity, innocence and youthful ignorance open her to exploitation by God or person. In Luke 1:34, Mary displays courage and intelligence when she asks Gabriel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" Here it can be seen

¹ 1517 was the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. See, "Reason is the devil's whore." David M. Whitford, "Martin Luther (1483—1546)," in *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

that Mary uses her intellect. She has full self-knowledge. She has the presence of mind to challenge the angel, unafraid, about the details of how she is to conceive a child if not in the normal way. In her acceptance to God's calling she had no way of knowing how God's plan for her pregnancy would play out - especially in relation to Joseph. Would he abandon her? Would she have to raise the baby alone in the ancient world? Her response to Gabriel, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Lk 1:38) is a response that instils fear when the possible outcomes include most definitely the risk of being stoned to death for becoming pregnant with another's child other than her betrothed. Yet it is an act of [profound] self-determination by Mary. In it can be seen how she exercises her free will and her self-transcendence as she consents to co-operating with God's plan. She displays self-possession and self-governance as she "ponders" the angel's greeting despite being "perplexed" by it. Her self-determination is evident as she offers herself, by her free will, to God's commissioning of her whole being.

By using Historical Criticism this research was regulated by societal expectations for absolute foundations, clarity and certainty when examining the pericope in its original text, or the artworks in their respective medieval or contemporary contexts. Stiver's observation that "... every age and context ask its own questions and addresses its own issues from the perspective of the gospel" has been influential in this research when identifying just what those "questions" and "issues" were for understanding the text and how this was interpreted in the artworks.² Thus, when art is used as a theological medium, that is to say, as sacred or religious art, it reveals the personality of each culture and its understanding of theology, whilst inviting the viewer to respond holistically.

The Early European artworks hold closely to the theology of the times in which they were created because they were commissioned by the Church and the artists had theological advisors and established artistic traditions guiding their creative output. The contemporary Australian artworks were compositions of the artists' own understanding and interpretations of the Annunciation pericope. These artists had no

² Stiver, *Theology after Ricoeur*, 5.

restrictions or limitations placed on their creative output by anyone and were free to interpret the pericope of the Annunciation as they saw fit.³

The Early European Renaissance artworks reflect the understanding that virginity in Mary is about “the other” – who is God and that her virginity is in service of the Incarnation and God’s plan. Mary’s virginity was in service - as proof - of Jesus’ divinity but it was also as a pre-requisite [fitting] for her to bear the Son of God. As the Mother of God, she had the privilege of being “full of grace.” Her child, Jesus, was *willed* into being in the collaboration of Mary, whose free will co-operated with God, and the Holy Spirit who deigned it to be so. Theologians and artists of the Early European Renaissance understood and accepted this. Their examination of Mary and her role in salvation history and the Incarnation itself was intended to deepen their understanding of God’s greatness and mercy.

Conversely, in the contemporary era of the 1990s, there is a paradigm shift as reason and faith become subject to science and logical inquiry. At this time, many modern scholars⁴ regularly referred to Jesus’ conception as being the result of Mary being seduced or raped. In a concession to the divine in the begetting of Jesus, God the Holy Spirit was often regarded as a sexual partner and not the Creator. Also, many scholars of the era regarded the Annunciation as a theologoumenon.

In summary, the purpose of this research was to discover if the understanding of the Annunciation had evolved over time; or if there had been junction or disjunction between the articulated theology of the Church of each period that was examined, and the resultant theology presented in the artworks. This research revealed how each of the artists interpreted the theology in the Lukan account of the Annunciation for their time, and how their interpretation was influenced by their historical circumstances. It was discovered that both the Early European Renaissance artworks share the view of the Lukan author. As for the contemporary Australian artworks, the triptych by Alan

³ In the artwork of the *Rothschild Prayer Book* is the imitation of the Divine Office which was directed by the Roman Catholic Church. Whoever commissioned this prayer book and the artists producing it were bound by the restrictions and limitations of the Roman Catholic Church and its Tradition and Magisterium and were not likely to conflict. The altarpiece by Nicolás Falcó was also subject to these restrictions and limitations.

Oldfield could be considered as incorporating both the traditional and contemporary understanding of the Annunciation pericope. However, the artwork done by John Paul departs from the Lukan author's writings as well as the well-established artistic traditions in its depiction as it challenges not only the theological knowledge but also the understanding of the Annunciation. Thus, the perspective of the interplay between text and artworks that emerged was that the communication of the Annunciation event depends greatly on the historical circumstances in which they are interpreted.

Further Research

Further research could be conducted to discover how the Annunciation is understood and depicted in icons of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Alternatively, how the Annunciation is understood and depicted in artworks of the Middle Eastern countries.

Appendix A: Detailed Description of the Rothschild Prayer Book¹

The Rothschild Prayer Book has a silver-gilt cast and chased centrepieces of the binding. These show the lion rampant of the Palatinate and the diaper² of Bavaria, with the Wittelsbach coat of arms, cornerpieces, clasps and catches, leaf edges gilt and gaufered to a diaper pattern. Its size, 228 x 160mm has 252 leaves of parchment,³ each devotion opens with a five- or six-line illuminated initial with staves of acanthus⁴ against a coloured ground. The script is Gothic rotunda in black ink, in Latin, the Use of Rome, and the text space is 115 x 41 mm, 18 long lines ruled in brown ink and red rubrics. There are two sets of foliations: one in Arabic numerals in pencil at the top right-hand corner of every recto with I, II added on the first and last folios; the other set is also in Arabic numerals in ink at the lower left corner underneath the majority of the sixty-seven full-page miniatures.⁵ There are twelve full-page calendar borders with *camaïeu d'or*⁶ frames with roundels illustrating major feasts, zodiac signs⁷ and full-colour miniatures of occupations of the month. There are five small miniatures with accompanying full-page borders, sixty-seven full-page arch-topped miniatures with surrounding borders and complementary borders on the facing pages, two further text-pages with full borders, all the borders of richly varied *trompe l'oeil* type. There are also some with sprays of acanthus and strewn flowers and including insects and vignettes, and some with *camaïeu d'or* architectural surrounds with sculptural figures or reliefs. Others have jewels and enamels against coloured grounds, individual borders replicate cloth of gold, peacock feathers, and on some pages, the border space contains narratives to augment or complement the subject of the miniature. However, the artwork lacks four leaves, three with miniatures and one with a full-page border,

¹ Taken from the Christie's sales catalogue. Accessed <https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/books-manuscripts/the-rothschild-prayerbook-a-book-of-hours-5766082-details.aspx>

² A diaper in this context is "a trellis of repetitive square or diamond shapes, found on furniture, textiles, and ceramics as a decorative." Michael Clarke and Deborah Clarke, "Diaper," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art Terms* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2010).

³ Parchment or vellum, is a writing support material made from goat or calf skin; however the term *vellum* refers to material which is made from calf skin that has a flesh side and a hair side. Brown, *Understanding Illuminated Manuscripts: A Guide to Technical Terms*. 95.

⁴ "The Tree of Jesse is often based on the acanthus." Hall, *Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols*, 142. Thus the artist/creator may have been making a direct reference to the prophecy of Isa 11:1 instead of just mere decoration.

⁵ Kay Sutton and Margaret M. Manion, *Revealing the Rothschild Prayer Book (Book of Hours) C.1505-1510: From the Kerry Stokes Collection* (Perth, WA: Fremantle Press, 2015), 19.

⁶ A French term which means monochrome. Michael Clarke and Deborah Clarke, "Camaïeu," in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art Terms* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁷ The zodiac is not Christian, but its inclusion shows the cultural diversity of the time in this particular part of Europe.

slight pigment losses from the backgrounds of two miniatures, folios 120 *verso* and 124 *verso*, with a small smudge on the edge of a border on folios 1 *verso*, 2, 5 *verso* and 125. The otherwise immaculate condition of the artwork can be attributed to the fact that the book has been closed for most of its existence; and by not being subjected to regular exposure to light, the colours are still vibrant. The provenance of this prayer book has had it pass through the hands of at least four Rothschild family owners, however because the family is Jewish it is assumed they had little use for a Christian prayer book and therefore it was not handled very often.⁸ On the other hand its lack of use could indicate that the person who commissioned it was more interested in its artistic merit, not its religious purpose.

⁸ The provenance for the Rothschild Prayer Book is not certain until it becomes the property of Anselm von Rothschild (1803-1874), then Baron Nathaniel von Rothschild (1836-1905), son of Anselm; followed by Baron Alphonse von Rothschild (1878-1942): he inherited Nathaniel's palace and, presumably, the manuscript along with it. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis Series Nova 2844 (returned to the Rothschild family in 1999 and sold at *The Collection of the Barons Nathaniel and Albert von Rothschild*, Christie's London 8 July 1999, lot 102).

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